

Merton Council Overview and Scrutiny Commission



Date: 26 February 2024
Time: 7.15 pm
Venue: Merton Civic Centre

AGENDA

	Page Number
1 Apologies for absence	
2 Declarations of pecuniary interest	
3 Minutes of the previous meeting	1 - 4
4 BCU Commander - crime and policing in Merton <i>To follow</i>	
5 Safer Merton - VAWG Strategy	5 - 38
6 Work programme	39 - 46

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Overview and Scrutiny Commission membership

Councillors:

Edward Foley (Chair)
Mike Brunt (Vice-Chair)
Agatha Mary Akyigyina OBE
Laxmi Attawar
Billy Hayes
Usaama Kaweesa
Paul Kohler
Nick McLean
Stuart Neaverson
John Oliver
Tony Reiss

Substitute Members:

Sheri-Ann Bhim
Michael Butcher
Stephen Mercer
Thomas Barlow
Anthony Fairclough
Robert Page

Co-opted Representatives

Mansoor Ahmad, Parent Governor
Representative - Secondary and Special
Sectors
Becky Cruise, Parent Governor
Representative
Dr Oona Stannard, Catholic Diocese
Roz Cordner, Church of England Diocese

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Members are advised to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting. If a pecuniary interest is declared they should withdraw from the meeting room during the whole of the consideration of that matter and must not participate in any vote on that matter. For further advice please speak with the Managing Director, South London Legal Partnership.

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

Overview and Scrutiny describes the way Merton's scrutiny councillors hold the Council's Executive (the Cabinet) to account to make sure that they take the right decisions for the Borough. Scrutiny panels also carry out reviews of Council services or issues to identify ways the Council can improve or develop new policy to meet the needs of local people. From May 2008, the Overview & Scrutiny Commission and Panels have been restructured and the Panels renamed to reflect the Local Area Agreement strategic themes.

Scrutiny's work falls into four broad areas:

- ⇒ **Call-in:** If three (non-executive) councillors feel that a decision made by the Cabinet is inappropriate they can 'call the decision in' after it has been made to prevent the decision taking immediate effect. They can then interview the Cabinet Member or Council Officers and make recommendations to the decision-maker suggesting improvements.
- ⇒ **Policy Reviews:** The panels carry out detailed, evidence-based assessments of Council services or issues that affect the lives of local people. At the end of the review the panels issue a report setting out their findings and recommendations for improvement and present it to Cabinet and other partner agencies. During the reviews, panels will gather information, evidence and opinions from Council officers, external bodies and organisations and members of the public to help them understand the key issues relating to the review topic.
- ⇒ **One-Off Reviews:** Panels often want to have a quick, one-off review of a topic and will ask Council officers to come and speak to them about a particular service or issue before making recommendations to the Cabinet.
- ⇒ **Scrutiny of Council Documents:** Panels also examine key Council documents, such as the budget, the Business Plan and the Best Value Performance Plan.

Scrutiny panels need the help of local people, partners and community groups to make sure that Merton delivers effective services. If you think there is something that scrutiny should look at, or have views on current reviews being carried out by scrutiny, let us know.

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Agenda Item 3

All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the committee/panel. To find out the date of the next meeting please check the calendar of events at your local library or online at www.merton.gov.uk/committee.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

31 JANUARY 2024

(7.15 pm - 8.45 pm)

PRESENT: Councillor Edward Foley (in the Chair), Councillor Michael Brunt, Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina, Councillor Laxmi Attawar, Councillor Billy Hayes, Councillor Usaama Kaweesa, Councillor Paul Kohler, Councillor Nick McLean, Councillor Stuart Neaverson, Councillor John Oliver, Councillor Tony Reiss, Becky Cruise, Dr Stannard and Roz Cordner

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Billy Christie, Eleanor Stringer, Peter McCabe, Brenda Fraser, Natasha Irons, Ross Garrod

Susan Botros (Equalities and Community Cohesion Officer), Polly Cziok (Executive Director of Innovation & Change), Jane McSherry (Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families), John Morgan (Executive Director, Adult Social Care, Integrated Care and Public Health), Asad Mushtaq (Executive Director of Finance & Digital) and Lucy Owen (Executive Director of Housing & Sustainable Development)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from Co-opted Member, Mansoor Ahmed.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of the previous meeting.

A Commission Member queried whether the OSC working group looking at the alignment of scrutiny panels would be established soon. Unfortunately, with scrutiny officer resource still being minimal, it is not currently possible to commence this project.

4 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION STRATEGY (Agenda Item 4)

Susan Botros, Equalities & Community Cohesion Lead, gave an update on the work of the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2024-26.

The strategy outlines Merton's commitment to tackling inequalities and this refreshed Strategy has incorporated feedback from the public consultation, which ran from August to November 2023.

Beyond the nine characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010, the strategy considers four additional groups who are at risk of experiencing disadvantage in accessing Council services. The four identified groups are:

- Care experienced young people.
- Armed forces veterans
- One-parent households
- Socio-economic status.

In response to questions from Commission Members, the Equalities & Community Cohesion Lead expanded on the following points.

There is a heritage action point that will continue the work on street names. Objective 4, improving our evidence base to inform our decision making, includes evidence gathering via consultations and ensuring these are inclusive of certain communities. Next steps will also involve getting in touch with Windrush community members and stakeholders.

An additional Monitoring & Evaluation document will be included alongside the strategy. Once the strategy is approved, monitoring and evaluation and KPI's will be included.

The actions in the implementation plan are linked to the Council Plan and other key Council Strategies and delivery plans. The actions are also linked to consultation feedback.

The topic of blind recruitment sits with the internal workforce EDI. An internal strategy is being developed, with EDI at the heart of it and staff will be offered inclusive recruitment training.

A Commission Member suggested that parents and widows should also be considered along with the additional groups.

The Equalities & Community Cohesion Lead was thanked for her attendance.

5 BUDGET/BUSINESS PLAN (Agenda Item 5)

The Chair invited Cllr Billy Christie, Cabinet Member for Finance & Corporate Services, to introduce the report. The second round of proposals follow on from the

first round of budget scrutiny and includes information on the government provisional settlement and the proposals agreed at Cabinet.

The Cabinet Member added that although the new Government funding was announced today, we are far from receiving the funding that we need. We stand to receive £20m less this year than we did in 2010 (Received £93m in 2010. The coming year will see us receive £75m). Yet inflation in the years since then has increased by nearly 47%.

However, through some adjustments, we have been able to identify growth bids to further invest and maintain our vital local services (these are outlined in Cabinet papers). We are confident this budget is robust, reasonable, and sustainable and projects a balanced budget for the next financial year.

The Chair invited the Executive Director of Finance & Digital to comment on the MTFS for 2024/25. There are continued pressures around social care, and temporary accommodation.

This is the fifth year of receiving a one-off settlement which makes strategic planning difficult.

The Chair invited questions:

Pressures still exist, especially around social care, but there is good work being done in tackling agency costs.

Capital programme info – how can this be scrutinised? The Executive director of Finance stated that Members are welcome to request further detail on the projects. The Leader commented that several of the lines within the Capital Programme have been longstanding and included for years and therefore subject to scrutiny, discussed at multiple panels, published etc. Also, as with the budget process, questions can be raised at any point by Members, not just in scrutiny. The Leader committed to take away the feedback about the request for further information to be included on the capital programme items.

Core Spending Power – Merton's CSP increases by 5.8% but 3.6% of that is an assumption that we will be raising council tax by the maximum amount. The Government Settlement is not enough, many Local Authorities are on the brink of bankruptcy.

Cost of Living crisis – Around 13,000 families are in fuel poverty. Helping residents through the cost-of-living crisis remains the administrations number one priority. We set up a cost-of-living emergency fund, young savers, hold advice days. Cabinet Member highlighted Merton investment of £13m into Council Tax support scheme, which is one of the most generous support schemes in the country.

6 BUDGET/BUSINESS PLAN - LATEST CABINET PAPERS (Agenda Item 6)

Taken with Item 5.

7 SCRUTINY OF THE BUSINESS PLAN; COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS (Agenda Item 7)

There were no comments received from the Panels.

8 IDENTIFY QUESTIONS FOR THE BOROUGH COMMANDER (Agenda Item 8)

Commission Members were reminded to send any questions for the Brough Commander by 5pm on 5th February at the very latest. This will allow enough time for Clair Kelland to provide written responses as requested.

9 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 9)

The work programme was agreed.

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Date: 26th February 2024

Wards: All

Subject: Update on the work of Safer Merton and Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Safety of Women and Girls, including street lighting.

Lead Director: Dan Jones

Lead Member: Councillor Eleanor Stringer, Cabinet Lead for Civic Pride

Lead Officers: Zoe Gallen (VAWG Lead), Katy Saunders (Community Safety Team Manager), Megan Hatton (Head of Safer Merton, CCTV and Resilience)

Recommendations:

- A. For the Committee to note the update on the work of VAWG and Safety of Women and Girls agenda.
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the work of Safer Merton in delivering Merton's VAWG Strategy 2022-25 and an update on the work being done around the Safety of Women and Girls in Merton, including street lighting. This works links to Civic Pride and ensuring the borough is a safe space to live, work and visit.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. Safer Merton continues to co-ordinate the partnership approach to respond to VAWG.
- 2.2. This includes:
- Management of the VAWG Strategic Board (quarterly meetings).
 - Promoting the VAWG strategy.
 - Delivering the VAWG action plan.
 - Running the three weekly domestic violence MARAC¹ meetings.
 - Continuing to raise awareness of all forms of VAWG across the Council, partnership, and community, this includes domestic violence and abuse, sexual violence and abuse, Honour based violence and harmful practices and modern slavery.

¹ Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference for high risk domestic abuse cases.
<https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/MARAC%20FAQs%20General%20FINAL.pdf>

- Responding to the Member's motion on the Safety of Women and Girls following the murder of Sarah Everard in March 2021. Safer Merton has continued to coordinate the cross-council Safety of Women and Girls task group to inform our work on reducing VAWG and addressing male behaviour.
- Promoting Merton's Safer Streets work, including the launch of the Safe Zones and Ask for Angela, supporting business to ensure women feel safe on our streets and in our night time economy.
- Ensuring we meet policy and statutory requirements, specifically conducting Domestic Homicide Reviews (one active at present) and co-ordinating the work of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- Commissioning and managing the delivery of front-line services for victims of domestic abuse. This includes -

The Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy Service (IDVAs) – currently 3x IDVAs, 1x IDVA in Adult Social Care and 1x Caseworker in Children's Schools and Families, provided by Victim Support.

Running the weekly One Stop Shop drop-in advice surgeries.

Joint commissioning of the Complex Needs IDVA Service with Wandsworth, Kingston, and Richmond.

Refuge provision –17 beds for women fleeing domestic abuse.

Coordinating referrals to the PAC (prevent and Change) programme for perpetrators of domestic abuse, alongside six other boroughs that are part of the project. This project was a joint venture funded by the Home Office for two years. As of Q3 2023/24 five Merton referrals have been submitted for the perpetrator and two victims/ survivors are being supported.

From January 2024 finance has also been secured for GLA DASA (Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation) funding to provide a Housing IDVA to provide support to domestic abuse victims under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

- 2.3. We have successfully bid for funding from the VRU (Violence Reduction Unit) for the IRIS project which provides workers within GP surgeries across Merton, upskilling staff on how to support VAWG victims, as well as ensuring referrals are sent to the correct organisations so that victims get a better support network. The VRU are funding the first 12 months and the ICB (Integrated Care Board) the second 12 months.
- 2.4. We have also successfully bid for funding from the VRU for interventions addressing child and adolescent to parent violence and abuse (CAPVA) which allows for two specialist posts working alongside social workers to support families where they are experiencing this form of abuse. This work is currently being developed in partnership with Children's Social Care.
- 2.5. **Update of key pieces of work on Women and Girls safety**
- 2.6. **Safer Streets Round 4 Funding:** Safer Merton was successful in its joint bid with Wandsworth, Kingston, and Richmond for Round 4 of the Home Office's Safer Streets funding. The bid focused on supporting interventions aimed at preventing violence against women and girls in public places and on engaging with men to change attitudes and behaviours.



- 2.7. This work includes **Bystander training** provided to professionals and the community with three sessions taking place during 2023. This helps people to feel empowered to support someone that may be experiencing harassment or misogyny in a public space by intervening safely. We have also recruited internal and external bystander ‘train the trainers’ to help roll out this training further in 2024 to the wider community and professionals.
- 2.8. In September a Bystander session was held with Merton and Richmond **Youth Parliament** so young people could discuss their role in helping to keep young women and girls safe. Actions from this include having young person’s representatives (both female and male) on the Safety of Women and Girls Tasking Group.



Drawn by: www.sandrahowgate.com

- 2.9. We worked with businesses to promote the **Ask for Angela** scheme and roll out **Business Tool Kits** on how to keep women safe at night. This

includes training for staff on how to recognise and deal with vulnerability and harassment. There is a currently a high take up of Ask for Angela in Wimbledon town centre, the aim is to refresh this and roll out the scheme to the other town centres on borough. We are also working with colleagues in the Council's Licensing department on how these resources can be incorporated into businesses future licensing applications.

- 2.10. In addition, Merton has signed up to the **Mayor of London's Night Safety Charter**². The charter has been created to make London a city where all women feel confident and welcome at night and is part of the Mayor's Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and London's commitment to the UN Women Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces global initiative.



- 2.11. Also funded by Safer Streets was a **Women's Night Time Safety Audit** carried out in 2023. The findings of this work is being fed into Merton's Night Time Economy Strategy to ensure women feel safe in our night time economy. This work will be progressed in 2024.
- 2.12. Launch of **Safe Zones** in Wimbledon and Mitcham run by Merton Street Pastors. Wimbledon takes place on the first Friday of the month and Mitcham on the last Friday of the month.
- 2.13. At the most recent Safe Zones, Wimbledon Safe Zone engaged with 13 people, handed out water bottles to 18 people, flip flops given out to 2 people and 3 homeless people were engaged with.
- 2.14. At the most recent Mitcham Safe Zone, 12 people were engaged with, 20 water bottles were given out and given out alongside 1 pair of flip flops.
- 2.15. This work is possible due to a combination of Safer Streets and VRU funding, which has allowed us to invest in extra capacity for Street Pastors to

² <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/arts-and-culture/24-hour-london/womens-night-safety-charter#acc-i-57686>

be trained and deployed to busy night-time economy locations and the purchase of Safe Zone equipment.



- 2.16. There is now a dedicated **Merton Safer Streets web page** detailing the work that has been done so far:
- 2.17. <https://www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/crime-prevention-and-community-safety/vawg/safer-streets>
- 2.18. Safer Merton have secured **Home Office Young Women and Girls funding 2022-25** for **St Giles Trust** to work with young women in Merton schools at risk of violence and exploitation via mentorship and group work. Mentors have lived experience of the issues discussed. 10 mentees were worked with in the last quarter in two Merton schools via this funding. The work includes professional sessions to upskill teachers on recognising those at risk.
- 2.19. *“I really enjoy it. When I speak to them (Mentor) about things they understand me – situations that I’m in they can relate to” - Mentee*
- 2.20. *Actual lived experiences made the training useful in developing awareness, understanding and empathy” - Professional*
- 2.21. We have held several **Women’s Walk and Talks** in partnership with local Police Safer Neighbourhood Teams, with four taking place at locations across the borough in the past six months. These sessions have been on a Saturday or weekday evening, where Council and Police officers meet in the community and walk with women whilst discussing issues around safety and crime. The walk and talks have given us feedback on how women feel in the borough and suggestions on how we can all work together so women feel safer. We have also promoted the Police Street Safe³ initiative where women can feedback intelligence on locations where they do not feel safe.

³ <https://www.met.police.uk/notices/street-safe/street-safe/>



- 2.22. **White Ribbon Accreditation:** White Ribbon UK is a charity focused on engaging with men and boys to end violence against women and girls and is part of our work to develop a strategic approach to ensuring male accountability for ending violence against women and girls. The White Ribbon Steering Group led the work to ensure Merton became White Ribbon accredited. This was achieved in September 2023, and we have several Champions and Ambassadors within the Council promoting the safety of women and girls and challenging misogynistic behaviour and language. We continue to develop our White Ribbon action plan and this year we will be asking our partners and residents to make the White Ribbon promise and become Champions and Ambassadors.



- 2.23. We recognise importance of working with men to shape wider behavioural change. We commissioned a male survey to hear the views of men and how they can support this work, and we will be developing a male allyship campaign, starting with a specific **male allyship session** for staff and partners in February 2024.
- 2.24. We are currently working with the **Borough of Sport** team on initiatives on how we can use physical exercise and activities to help make girls and women feel safer, especially during the darker months.
- 2.25. **Continued regular communications** via the Council's publicity channels to raise awareness of VAWG and promote the services available to victims in Merton. This includes working in partnership with Police and other partners on the annual **16 Days Against Domestic Violence and Abuse Campaign** which includes awareness raising, training and events to shine a spotlight on the different forms of VAWG and signpost to organisations which can provide support to victims.

3 SAFETY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS AND LIGHTING IN MERTON

- 3.1. All roads/ footways/ footpaths that are maintained by the London Borough of Merton that have associated street lighting are lit to the required standards as outlined in BS5489-1:2020. The lighting class that Merton currently lights to within this British Standard when the lanterns are fully operational is P3. A description of the type of road and users that lighting class P3 is recommended is for roads with a speed of 30mph or less and has moderate night-time usage of vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists.
- 3.2. Since 2014, Merton Council have converted over 94% of its lanterns (12,250 out 13,000) on the network to LED lanterns. To save further energy consumption, all LED lanterns that have been installed since 2014 within the borough have a dimming regime programmed (reduced by 25% between 20.00 to 23.00 and reduced by 50% between 23.00 to dawn). Therefore, once the dimming of the lanterns is operational from 23.00 to dusk (50% dimming) this is reducing the lighting class to P4. Within the British Standard BS5489-1:2020, lighting class P4 is described as minor night-time use by pedal cyclists or pedestrians solely associated with adjacent properties.
- 3.3. Over the past 14 to 15 years (since 2008/ 09), Merton street lighting energy consumption has reduced from 7,283,250 Kwh (Estimated Annual Consumption) to 2,254,462 Kwh (Estimated Annual Consumption) at the end of financial year 2022/23, meaning total energy consumption savings of 70%.
- 3.4. It is recommended that Merton shouldn't reduce its lighting class beyond P4 as this would be more in keeping with village lighting and potentially have a negative affect when considering anti-social behaviour, crime and resident perspective when using the highway network at night.
- 3.5. Particularly during the summer months, when trees are in full leaf, in some locations due to the close proximity of where lamp columns and trees are located, the lighting levels/ outputs can be reduced due to shadowing. Also, when larger vehicles are parked in a residential street nearby a lighting column, this too could impend the lighting output of the lantern.
- 3.6. Weekly lighting night scouts are undertaken within the borough by Merton Council employees within Highways as well as by Merton Council's street lighting term maintenance contractor. The borough is split into right areas, and night scouts of each area is rotated. Therefore, each week, two of these areas are checked for any lighting issues and in addition any ad-hoc third party complaints that the Council receive via Fix My Street, e-mails, telephone calls etc are checked, and if necessary associated jobs are issued to our term contractor to repair.
- 3.7. Safer Merton link in with the Highways department with regards to any feedback received regarding poor lighting and the impact this has on feelings of safety, so these areas can be inspected as part of the night scouts. The Women's Walk and Talks previously described have been a useful tool to enable this.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1. There are no alternative options, we continue to use the VAWG Strategy 2022-25 to inform our work.

5 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 5.1. The VAWG Strategy 2022-25 and action plan was developed by the VAWG Board and shared with partners. Feedback from victims and survivors has been incorporated into the strategy.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. Currently the domestic abuse service is funded by the Council and MOPAC LCPF funding which runs 2022-25. The women's Refuge is funded by the Council's Housing Department. We will continue to look for additional funding to maintain and grow our services.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. The work of VAWG and Safety of Women and Girls agenda is part of the Council's statutory duties under legislation such as the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- 7.2. There are no legal implications arising out of the update in this report.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. Domestic abuse can have major implications on community cohesion. With 1 in 20 residents affected by this crime, the partnership's work in supporting victims, acting against perpetrators, and ensuring that our communities understand the work we are doing is vital in achieving our ambitions; for more victims to report and for more friends, family and/ or neighbours to report matters of concern.
- 8.2. The United Kingdom ratifies the Istanbul Convention, and this will be a positive way forward supporting victims and survivors.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. As Safer Merton oversee the work, the team ensure that all crime, disorder, and safeguarding concerns are considered within this work.
- 9.2. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and subsequent guidance from the Home Office and MOPAC sets out the responsibilities for the Local Authority and the Community Safety Partnership

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1. Due to the large and ongoing demand for the domestic abuse services during the pandemic and onwards, we are looking for additional funding to ensure the domestic abuse community service can grow to manage increased demand.

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- Appendix 1 – Merton VAWG Strategy
- Appendix 2 – Merton Council VAWG webpages:
<https://www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/crime-prevention-and-community-safety/vawg>

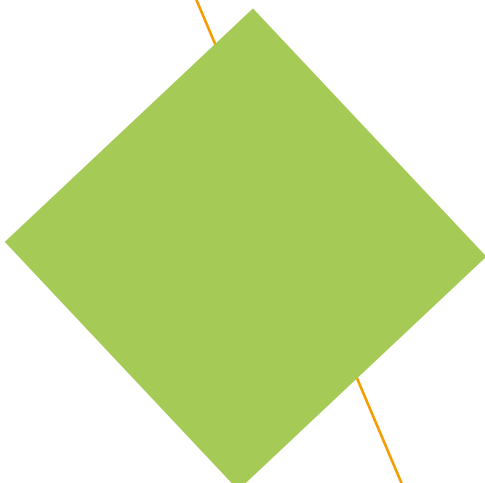
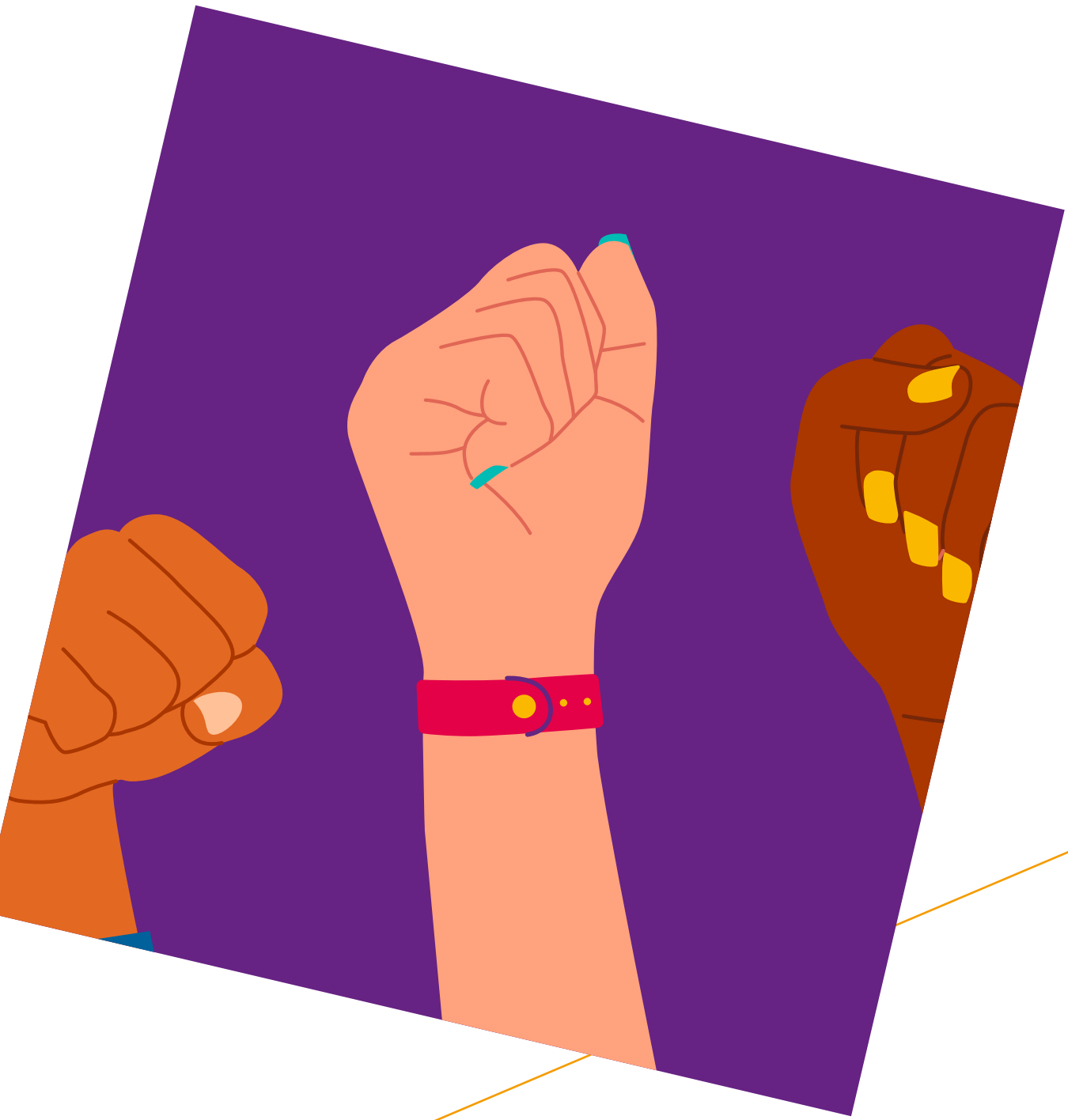
12 BACKGROUND PAPERS – NONE

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MERTON'S ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS

Strategy 2022 – 2025





CONTENTS

Foreword	4
The Way Forward: A Call to Action	5
Introduction	6
Definition of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)	7
Strategic Context	12
Prevalence of violence against women and girls in Merton	13
What did survivors with lived experience tell us?	14
What is our approach to ending VAWG?	15
Partnership Objective 1: Raise awareness and coordinated partnership working	16
Partnership Objective 2: Prevent VAWG through early intervention	17
Partnership Objective 3: Support victims, survivors and their children	18
Partnership Objective 4: Hold perpetrators to account	19
Partnership Objective 5: Improve the safety of women and girls	20
Governance	21
Appendix 1: List of specialist VAWG services in Merton	22
Appendix 2: List of abbreviations	23

FOREWORD

Preventing and responding to violence against women and girls remains a high priority for Merton's Safer Merton Partnership.

As more victims and survivors come forward to report domestic abuse and VAWG, we need to ensure that they get the support they need. We also want our services to reduce the impact on children and families who experience incidents.

This strategy sets out our partnership commitment to work together to prevent all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) including domestic abuse (DA) in Merton.

We want to see an increase in reporting as a result of raised community awareness and victim confidence, but this must go hand in hand with an increase in prosecution and convictions for what can still be hidden crimes.

We want to see early intervention and prevention, working with men and boys to tackle sexist and misogynistic attitudes, and building resilience in families.

We have committed to reviewing and developing our services so that fewer victims reach crisis point and that every victim is able to access co-ordinated support at the right time.

We will achieve these outcomes by raising awareness, providing early intervention, supporting victims and their families, and bringing perpetrators to justice.



Councillor Eleanor Stringer

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Civic Pride

THE WAY FORWARD: A CALL TO ACTION

This strategy sets out our vision for ending violence against women and girls. This is an ambitious vision which will be realised through a robust action plan.

We are working closely with residents, survivors, and multi-agency partners to develop this in order to address our five strategic objectives:

Partnership Objective 1:

Raise awareness and coordinated partnership working

Partnership Objective 2:

Prevent VAWG through early intervention

Partnership Objective 3:

Support victims, survivors, and their children

Partnership Objective 4:

Hold perpetrators to account

Partnership Objective 5:

Improve the safety of women and girls



An action plan will be published later in the year setting out the steps to be taken. Initial conversations suggest that these actions will include:

- work with schools in a preventative capacity,
- projects helping to make our streets safe,
- focused work with survivors from minoritised backgrounds and those who experience multiple disadvantage,
- focused work on how to meaningfully engage with a diverse range of survivors including children and young people,
- work in changing abuser behaviour,
- a focus on improving systems, processes and referral pathways.

The emphasis of the action plan will be on our coordinated community response and the role we can all play in ending VAWG. The action plan will also build on best practice work that we have been delivering across the borough.

Conclusion

Together we can end violence against women and girls. We believe that partnership working in a coordinated community response can help us achieve this.

This strategy sets out the role we can all play in responding to and ending VAWG.

We welcome professionals, residents, and survivors to join us in achieving our objectives.

Together, we can work to make our borough safer for everyone who is living, studying, working, visiting, and travelling in Merton.

INTRODUCTION

Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) is a fundamental human rights violation, which harms the lives of millions.

It is recognised as a worldwide issue of epidemic proportions. Nationally we know that on average two women are killed every week by a current or former partner and one in five women have experienced some form of sexual violence since the age of 16. But VAWG is also something that is happening here in Merton, estimated to be affecting around one in 20 women and girls at some point in their lifetime.

In many instances VAWG remains hidden and under-reported, but it is not inevitable and collectively we can end it. This strategy sets out the role we can all play in ending VAWG as part our coordinated community response

Preventing violence against women and girls is everybody's business. We want to ensure that everyone can identify victims and can intervene early to prevent situations from escalating to crisis point. We also want to ensure that we understand the needs of victims and their families.

This strategy builds on the nationally recognised best practice work that has been happening across our borough.

Survivor is a nationally recognised term to describe someone who has been a victim of abuse but who has continued to live, it is a positive term of empowerment and therefore used throughout the strategy.

This strategy will be accompanied by a robust action plan which will outline the steps we will take as a partnership to achieve our objectives. Our approach will use this strong foundation to continue our priority to end VAWG.

Our strategy recognises many strategies including:

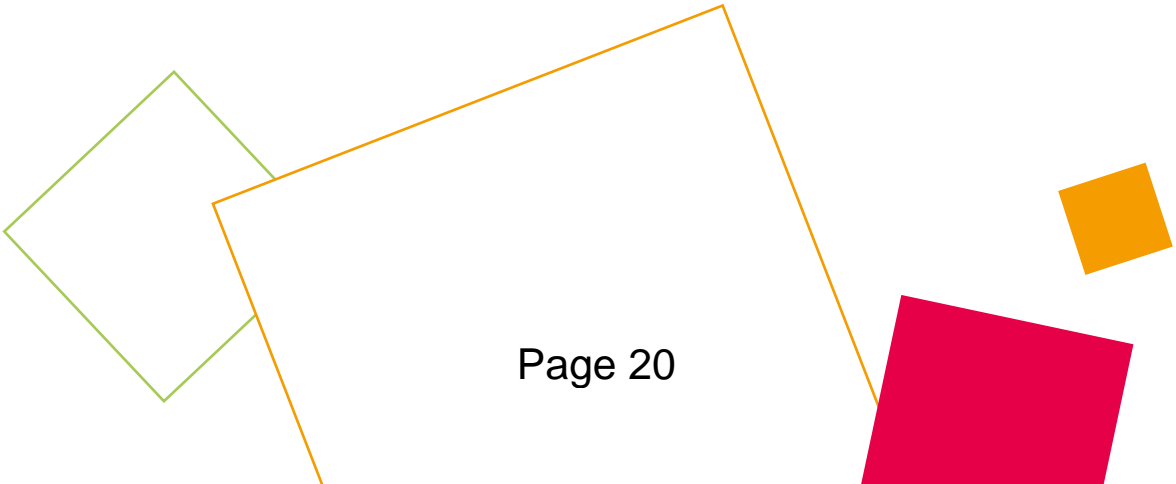
- The Government's 'Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2021,
- Home Office's 'Violence Against Women and Girls National Statement of Expectations' (NSE) published in December 2016, which outlines the expected standards for local areas when commissioning services.
- Mayor of London – VAWG Strategy 2022
- CLCH
- Probation
- Met Police, Action plan on tackling VAWG
- Mental Health

We have developed five shared partnership objectives that we will all work towards.

Our approach is framed within a VAWG strategy because we know that these crimes are disproportionately gendered. However, we intend to benefit all victims of these crimes.

Men and boys can also be victims of violence and abuse and so supporting men's services will not be excluded from consideration in this strategy. Our strategy puts the victim at the centre of service delivery, has a clear focus on perpetrators, keeping victims safe, and acknowledges the need to raise local awareness of the issues.

In developing this strategy we have consulted with users, elected members and our local partners. Our strategy also acknowledges the gendered nature of VAWG.



DEFINITION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (VAWG)

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is the umbrella term used to describe a range of violent and abusive acts and behaviours, which are predominantly, but not exclusively, directed against women and girls. This term is used to describe abuse against all genders but highlights the disproportionate impact on women and girls.

Locally and nationally, we have adopted the United Nations definition of VAWG, which defines VAWG 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.”

There are multiple forms of VAWG, whether physical, sexual, psychological, or economic. This can include violence in public places, such as sexual harassment, or within the private sphere such as intimate partner violence, which can often lead to homicide. Two women are killed every week by a partner or ex-partner in the UK. Some forms of violence are technology based, such as internet stalking, or driven by economic factors such as international trafficking of women and girls. Others are the result of harmful practices, such as Female Genital Mutilation, Forced Marriage, and virginity testing. These abuses can differ in how they are experienced, but all are the result of the misuse of power and control.

Type of Abuse	What does this mean?
Domestic abuse (including coercive control)	This is when a partner or family member has power and control over their victims and uses abuse to maintain it. Abuse can be physical, emotional, economic, psychological and/or sexual.
Rape and sexual violence	Rape is sex without consent. This means that rape isn't just people being physically forced into a sexual act, it also includes pressure that makes someone feel like they have no choice but to have sex or perform/receive a sexual act.
Female genital mutilation	This is the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non medical reasons.
Early and Forced marriage	This is where one or both people do not (or in cases of people with learning disabilities or reduced capacity, cannot) consent to the marriage as they are pressurised, or abuse is used, to force them to do so.
So called “honour” based violence	This is abuse and violence which is carried out in order to protect or defend perceived “honour” of the family and/or community. We are clear that there is no honour in honour-based violence.
Faith-based abuse	This is when someone uses religion or faith to justify the abuse of another person, usually a child or vulnerable adult. It could be caused by the perpetrator’s belief in witchcraft, spirit or demonic possession, ritual, or satanic abuse. It is not caused by religion or faith.
Sexual harassment	This is unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature which violates someone’s dignity, makes someone feel intimidated, degraded, or humiliated and/or creates a hostile or offensive environment.
Stalking	This is a pattern of persistent and unwanted attention that makes someone feel pestered, scared, anxious, or harassed.
Modern Slavery	This is an umbrella term for human trafficking and servitude. It is used when somebody is forced or controlled to do something, and another person gains from this.
Prostitution and Sexual exploitation	This is where someone is being coerced or forced into selling sex or performing sexual acts. Victim/survivors may also be trafficked into prostitution. Children, young people, and vulnerable adults may also be sexually exploited and coerced into receiving or performing sexual acts. Abuse of children and adults can include sharing pornographic images and the use of technology.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 definition:

Domestic abuse is behaviour between those aged over 16 years who are personally connected to each other, that is they are or have been intimate partners or family members, even after separation. Regardless of age, gender identity or reassignment, religion, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, marital status or background.

Behaviour is considered abusive when it consists of any of the following:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour, even after separation
- Economic abuse – means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect to acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or obtain goods or services
- Psychological, emotional, or other abuse

Includes so called 'honour-based' violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.

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 to assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

A child who sees, or hears, or experiences the effects of, domestic abuse and is related to the person being abused or the perpetrator is also regarded as a victim of domestic abuse in their own right.

As per Domestic Abuse Act 2021

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/contents/enacted>



What causes VAWG?

Many different reasons are given as to why VAWG happens. This includes blaming substances, mental ill health, anger issues, growing up in an abusive household, cultural practices, and stress. These issues might have an effect, but none of these issues CAUSE violence or abuse. Instead, evidence has shown that gender inequality is a key driver of VAWG.

The Council of Europe give three factors which lie at the root of the problem:

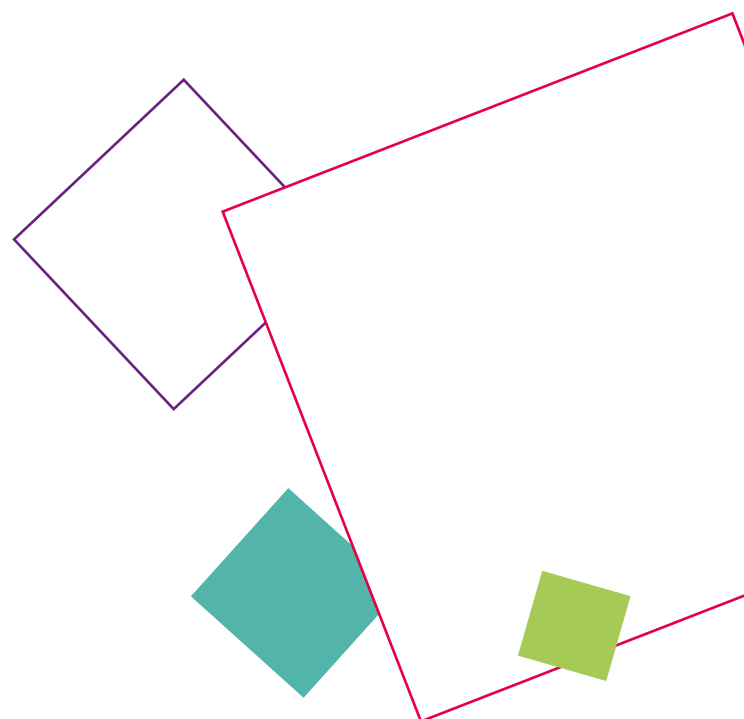
Cultural Factors	Legal Factors	Political Factors
<p>Sexist views and the idea that men can have more power over women and children, results in abuse being used to maintain this power. Gender stereotypes reinforce this inequality and creates an acceptance of violence and abuse.</p>	<p>Although abuse is illegal, sadly we see many victims blamed for the abuse and low sentences for abusers. This results in low reporting and abuse being allowed to continue.</p>	<p>The under-representation of women and minority groups in power and politics means they have fewer opportunities to shape the discussion and to affect changes in policy, or to adopt measures to end VAWG</p>
<p>For example: Sexist attitudes like believing men must be tough, strong, and always in control can result in them exerting control over a partner or family member. These attitudes are harmful to all genders.</p>	<p>For example: Rape convictions remain low and have got worse in recent years, with only 1.6% nationally leading to conviction in 2020. Survivors have told us that this sends a terrible message that rapists can 'get away with it' and allows abuse to continue.</p>	<p>For example: Rape in marriage only became a criminal offence in 1991 and coercive control only became an offence in 2015. Both happened because of lobbying by women's groups</p>

General Recommendation 19, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women: UN, 1992.

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/gender-matters/what-causes-gender-based-violence>

We also know that experiences of racism, classism, ageism, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism can make people more vulnerable to abuse and they may face additional barriers in accessing support.

We know that disabled people including those with mental ill health, are twice as likely to experience abuse and 80% of trans people have experienced emotional, sexual, or physical abuse from a partner or ex-partner. The Oxford dictionary defines Intersectionality as "the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage". It can also give some people advantage and opportunities that others don't have access to. Our strategy recognises the need for an intersectional approach which understands the barriers people face and how these connect with each other and with their experiences of abuse.



What are some of the common myths about VAWG?

Myth: To stay safe, women should not go out late at night

Women should not have to restrict their lives to be safe. We need to tell abusers to stop the abuse, not tell women to restrict their freedoms. Telling women this is victim blaming.

It is important to note that staying at home doesn't necessarily mean women will be safe either.

Statistically, women are more likely to be harmed in the home than on the street. Telling women to change behaviour does not address the root cause of abuse and will not result in change.

Myth: Abusers can still be good Parents

Children are recognised as victim/survivors in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 because where children are exposed to domestic abuse this is a form of psychological abuse. They do not have to witness the abuse to be affected by VAWG.

However, many children do see and hear abuse taking place within the home and children may also be physically harmed by the abuser particularly if they are trying to defend the non-abusive parent.

"An estimated 90% of children whose mothers are abused witness the abuse. The effects are traumatic and long-lasting. When a child witnesses domestic abuse this is child abuse. Between 40% and 70% of these children are also direct victims of abuse".
(Women's Aid)

Where there are children the onus should not be put on the mother to protect her children, abusers must be held to account for their behaviour and challenged on their parenting responsibilities.

Myth: Violence against women and girls only affects certain groups of women

Research has repeatedly shown violence can affect women from all social, economic, cultural, and family backgrounds.

There is no evidence to suggest that violence is more prevalent in some communities than others.

Instead, barriers to accessing support can increase vulnerability. Experiencing racism, ableism, or homophobia can influence someone reaching for support. This is why an intersectional approach is important

Myth: Women involved in prostitution cannot be raped or sexually assaulted

Sexual violence is any sexual act that a person did not consent to or is forced into against their will. Women involved in prostitution do experience rape and sexual assault.

Women involved in prostitution face discrimination and are often blamed for the abuse.

This is not acceptable, and we believe everyone should be supported to access support.

Myth: Forced marriage only happens in South Asian communities

Forced marriage affects a wide range of communities from different cultural backgrounds.

It affects men and women all over the world, regardless of race, ethnicity, or religion.

Labelling it as a problem for 'certain' communities creates harmful stereotypes and can create barriers for people accessing support.

Myth: Abuse is the result of an anger problem, use of substances or mental ill-health

There is no research to support this. Abuse and violence are about power and control. Abusers often choose when they abuse, often where there are no witnesses. We know that substances or mental ill health do not cause abuse. Many people who use substances or have a mental health condition do not abuse.

However, substance use or mental ill health can make existing abuse worse. It's important to offer abusers wider support, but there should be no excuse for abuse.

Myth: VAWG is mainly about physical violence

VAWG extends beyond just physical violence.

Instead, VAWG is about the different ways that victims are controlled, intimidated, humiliated, or threatened.

VAWG is about being denied human rights, to achieve this, abusers may use physical violence, but they also use methods such as psychological, emotional, and economic abuse. They may also use reproductive abuse whereby abusers prevent the survivor from making their own choices about pregnancy and having children. These types of abuse can be just as harmful as physical abuse.

Abusers may use children to abuse the non-abusive parent making a partner or ex-partner feel guilty about their children, using the children to relay messages, using children to monitor and report on the survivor's movements, using contact arrangements to harass their partner, or threatening to take children away.

Myth: Leaving an abusive relationship means the abuse will end

There can be many barriers to leaving an abusive relationship, and access to support and resources plays a role. Survivors should not be blamed if they do not leave, this is victim blaming.

We also know that risk escalates when survivors leave so survivors must be supported to leave safely if they choose to.

Even after leaving, survivors can still be at risk.

Survivors recall abusers continuing to stalk them and even using institutions, such as the family courts, to continue abuse. Support for survivors must therefore always be long-term.

Myth: Sexual violence is more likely to be committed by a stranger

At least two thirds of sexual assaults are committed by someone known to the survivor.

According to some studies only 2% of abusers are complete strangers. 97% of women who contacted Rape Crisis said they knew the person who raped them.

Myth: If a young person accepts drink, drugs, or money for sex its their choice to do so

This is a form of exploitation and usually the people supplying alcohol, money and gifts have the power in this relationship and will use this to their advantage.

Often the victims may not recognise what they are experiencing as abuse and may have misplaced loyalty to the person abusing them.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

National Strategic Context

Addressing VAWG is recognised as a priority area regionally, nationally and internationally. The UN Declaration (above) was adopted by the General Assembly in 1993. This was followed by a resolution of intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women in 2009.

In 2022, the Mayor of London published **Tackling Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) Strategy for London** – a London-wide plan aimed at ending all forms of violence against women in London.

In 2021, the Government published its **Tackling Violence against women and girls – The safety of women and girls across the country is our priority** – outlining a commitment to make tackling VAWG everyone’s business and outlining plans for increased support for service commissioners to assist women who have experienced violence.

[Tackling violence against women and girls strategy \(accessible version\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Mayor’s Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2018-2021 | London City Hall](#) – due to be refreshed in May 2022

Supporting male victims of crimes considered violence against women and girls

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-male-victims>



In 2021 the Met launched their **VAWG Action Plan**.

“Tackling violence remains our top operational priority, including crimes that disproportionately affect women and girls, such as domestic abuse and sexual violence. Male violence against women and girls has a profound and long-lasting impact on those directly affected, shattering the lives of victims, their families and those closest to them. Such violence also affects local communities and impacts on the public’s confidence in the safety of their area, and in the effectiveness of their police service.

Make no mistake, we in the Met will work relentlessly both to tackle violence perpetrated by men against women and girls, and to rebuild trust in the highest professional standards that we expect in policing.”

Metropolitan Police commissioner

<https://www.met.police.uk/>

PREVALENCE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN MERTON

It is widely acknowledged that all strands of VAWG are underreported, and that many victims/survivors do not come to the attention of services.

Over the next three years, a key priority for the partnership will be to increase this reporting.

Domestic Abuse

- Domestic violence and abuse (DVA) flagged offences account for 13.6% of all recorded crime in Merton. This equates to 8.5 offences/1000 population.
- 80% of DVA flagged offences are classed as Violence Against the Person offences (VAP) which are sub classified as those in which a physical injury occurs and those that don't including stalking and harassment.
- The proportion of Merton DV offences which result in any physical injury (classified as Violence with injury VWI) fell by 6% to 22.5%. The MPS average was down marginally at 24%.
- Around 4% of all DV flagged offences result in a physical injury described as moderate or serious. This is unchanged from the last report.
- The Detection Rate in Merton for DV offences was up 0.2% to 14.6% in 2021.
- Police offences from July 2021 – 2022 – 1,827 (MOPAC dashboard).

Between April 2020 and December 2021

- Merton's IDVA service received 1169 referrals.
- 55 referrals for our Merton refuge service.
- 1044 cases referred to DV Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).
- One Stop Shop cases were supported virtually by our IDVA service as it was closed face to face March 2020 – November 2021 due to the pandemic.

Forced Marriages

We have reported cases within Merton, even though the numbers are low we will continue to support our victims and survivors of forced marriage.

Victims Of Honour Based Violence (HBV or so called honour based violence)

We have reported cases within Merton, even though the numbers are low we will continue to support our victims and survivors of honour based violence.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

We have reported cases within Merton even, though the numbers are low we will continue to support our victims and survivors of Female Genital Mutilation.

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/female-genital-mutilation>

Sexual Violence

Merton has the third lowest number of sexual offences of the 32 London boroughs in FY2021-22.

The overall proportion of sexual offences increased by 1% from the last report accounting for 3% of all reported crime in Merton.

84% of victims of sexual offences in Merton were female.

Other data sources

The lasting impact of violence against women and girls - Office for National Statistics:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/thelastingimpactofviolenceagainstwomenandgirls/2021-11-24>

Violence against women and girls: Data landscape - Office for National Statistics:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/violenceagainstwomenandgirlsdatalandscape>

MOPAC Dashboard:

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/mayors-office-policing-and-crime-mopac/data-and-statistics/domestic-and-sexual-violence-dashboard>

WHAT DID SURVIVORS WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE TELL US?

Survivor is a nationally recognised term to describe someone who has been a victim of abuse but who has continued to live, it is a positive term of empowerment and therefore used throughout the strategy.

- Survivors told us that professionals need to be curious about abuse.
- Survivors should not be stereotyped as there is no 'type' of survivor.
- There needs to be long-term support, not just a response to crisis.
- Support should be made available sooner, not when survivors reach crisis.
- Services need to work together better so that survivors don't have to keep telling their story.
- Schools and education settings need to be part of the coordinated community response to VAWG.

We need to make sure professionals, friends and family can identify abuse and understand how to ask and respond.

Abby's words:

I'd been controlled half my life. I'd been in the relationship with him since I was 13 or 14 years old.

When I was at hospital, when I gave birth, I couldn't tell anyone working there I was being abused. I had all his family there. Even when the midwives took me to a room to ask if I was okay, I would say "No, I'm fine".

The neighbours knew what had been going on, but I'd begged them not to tell anyone. I was scared of social services taking my kids away, and this had stopped me from coming forward sooner.

He manipulated me so much.

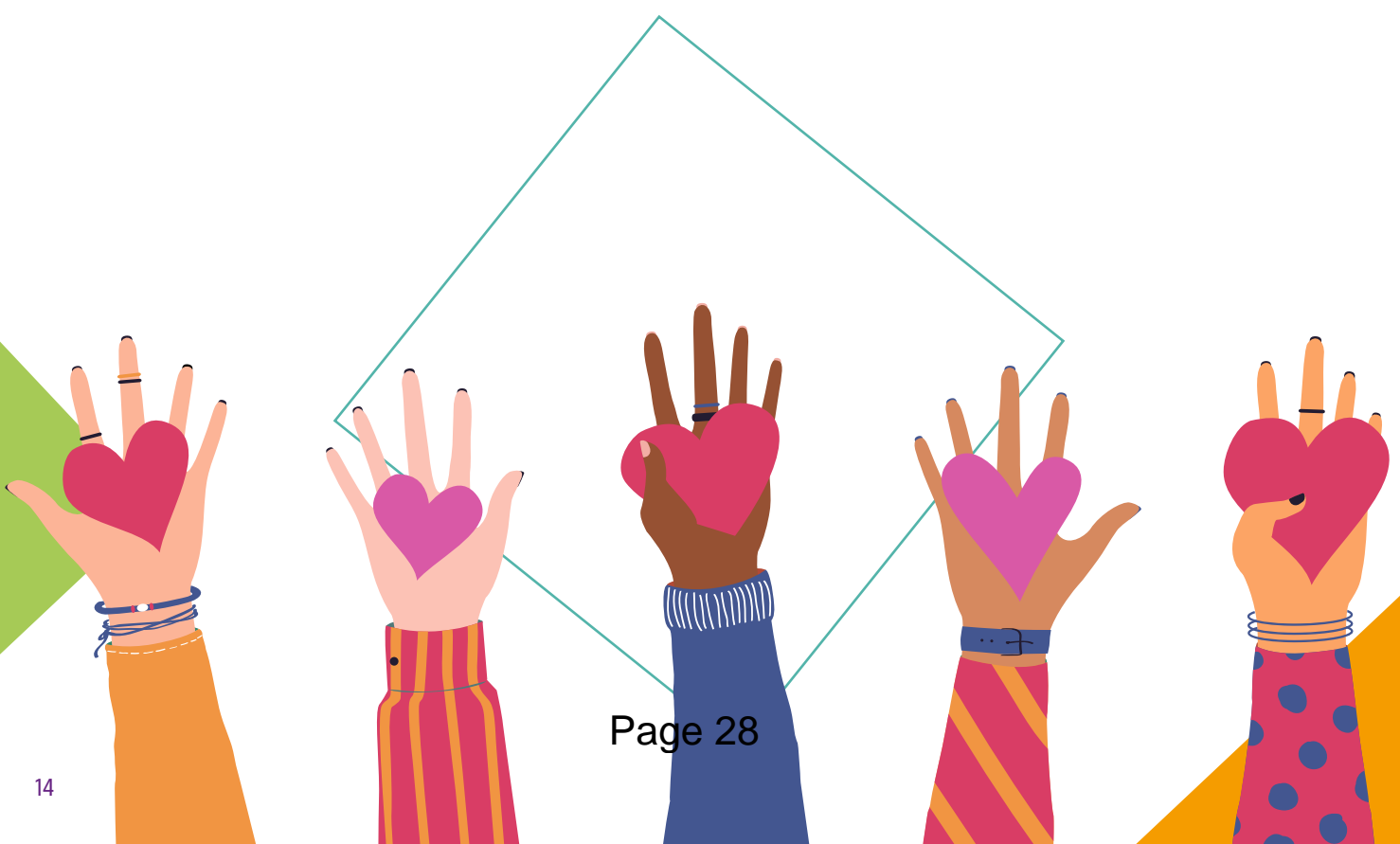
Penny's Words:

There was no physical abuse from my ex-husband – it was emotional and fiscal abuse. He would constantly say things like I'm over weight, I'm not a good role model for the children, I'm rubbish, etc. It eroded my self-esteem.

Even though he never hit physically hit me, I always felt in danger.

His body language and tone was so threatening.

He was always gas-lighting, telling me I'm crazy, that it's all in my head.



WHAT IS OUR APPROACH TO ENDING VAWG?

The Coordinated Community Response:

We recognise that real change in responding to and ending VAWG can only be achieved when all agencies, residents, and communities work effectively together.

On a survivor's journey, they are likely to encounter a number of services, organisations, and individuals. Each will hold vital information and can help build a picture of what support is needed so survivors do not have to navigate services to get

the help they need. Ensuring everyone knows the role they play in responding to VAWG and how they work with each other is a process known as the Coordinated Community Response (CCR).

Our CCR approach ensures a whole system response to a whole person. The following diagram shows some of the different agencies and groups who may need to be involved in the response.



PARTNERSHIP OBJECTIVE 1: RAISE AWARENESS AND COORDINATED PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Ambition: Fostering and integrated and coordinated approach to tackling domestic abuse and VAWG (Coordinated partnership working)

We will create a culture change to address the issues that cause VAWG and develop services that meet the intersecting needs of survivors and their families.

An effective partnership will have robust ways of working to ensure it is meeting its objectives, has a shared understanding of what best practice looks like, has respect between agencies and is informed by the voice of survivors.

We will:

- Have shared objectives, vision, joint responsibility, and equality between partners.
- Have clear structures and governance in place, with two way information flow, accountability and space for both strategic and operational input.
- Have a partnership strategy and action plan setting out who is doing what and when, and ensuring that outputs and outcomes are measurable.
- Have partnership and agency-specific policies, protocols and processes to ensure effective project delivery.
- Use data to measure and define success.
- Ensure the partnership has good representation from all agencies – including the voluntary sector.
- There is clear co-ordination across the partnership – supported by the Community Safety Team.
- There is continuous training and a commitment to effective change, awareness raising and skill development across the partnership workforce.
- Have specialist services to respond to VAWG.
- Our approach considers and meets the needs of Merton's diverse community.
- Victims and survivors will be consulted on all areas of the strategy and service provision.
- Work closely with housing departments and organisations to ensure that victim and survivors are safe.
- We will work towards achieving White Ribbon status.



PARTNERSHIP OBJECTIVE 2: PREVENT VAWG THROUGH EARLY INTERVENTION

Ambition: Preventing domestic abuse, VAWG and intervening early when people have experienced or are at risk of domestic abuse or VAWG (Prevent VAWG & Early Intervention)

Prevention of VAWG must always be our first priority. In order to prevent VAWG we must address the root causes of the problem. As VAWG is the result of gender inequality and discrimination, we will work collaboratively with agencies and communities in tackling the harmful behaviours and attitudes that underpin abuse. This approach must include challenging sexist and misogynistic attitudes.

Once patterns of violence are entrenched the harder it is to break the cycle of abuse, support victims to recovery and independence, and deter perpetrators. We recognise that abuse can happen at any stage of a person's life, this strategy will take a life course approach to ensure all victims – and their families – have access to the right support at the right time to help them live free from domestic violence and abuse.

We will:

- We will make prevention and early intervention a core foundation of our approach to tackling VAWG.
- We will work with partners to identify domestic abuse and VAWG early.
- We will train professionals, so they understand the dynamics of VAWG.



PARTNERSHIP OBJECTIVE 3: SUPPORT VICTIMS, SURVIVORS AND THEIR CHILDREN

Ambition: Providing accessible, evidence based, holistic support to people who have experienced or are at risk of domestic abuse and VAWG (Supporting victims & survivors and their children, improve outcomes)

We understand that survivors not only need specialist support for the abuse they have experienced, but may also need support with housing, mental health, substance use, child care, immigration, and other support. We are determined to create a joined-up approach with services working together, so that survivors are provided the right support at the right time.

There will be a continued focus on improving outcomes for victims and their children – to ensure they can access the right support at the right time by the right service. We will ensure that the victim is at the centre of service delivery and will ensure that services are flexible and responsive to the victim's experience and voice.

We will:

- Provide an IDVA service for Victim and Survivors of domestic Abuse.
- We will provide a refuge for women fleeing to our borough.
- We will work with partners to ensure victim/ survivors and their children are safe.
- We will have a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) to ensure high risk cases are known and discussed with our partners.
- We will have a One Stop Shop so victims and survivors can access support.
- We will offer victims and survivors local and national support services to support them.
- We will ensure that victims and survivors of VAWG have access to services.
- We will work in partnership with Children's services to ensure that victim/ survivor and children's safety is not just the responsibility of the victim/ survivor and the perpetrator is part of the safety planning ensuring the victim and children are safe.



PARTNERSHIP OBJECTIVE 4: HOLD PERPETRATORS TO ACCOUNT

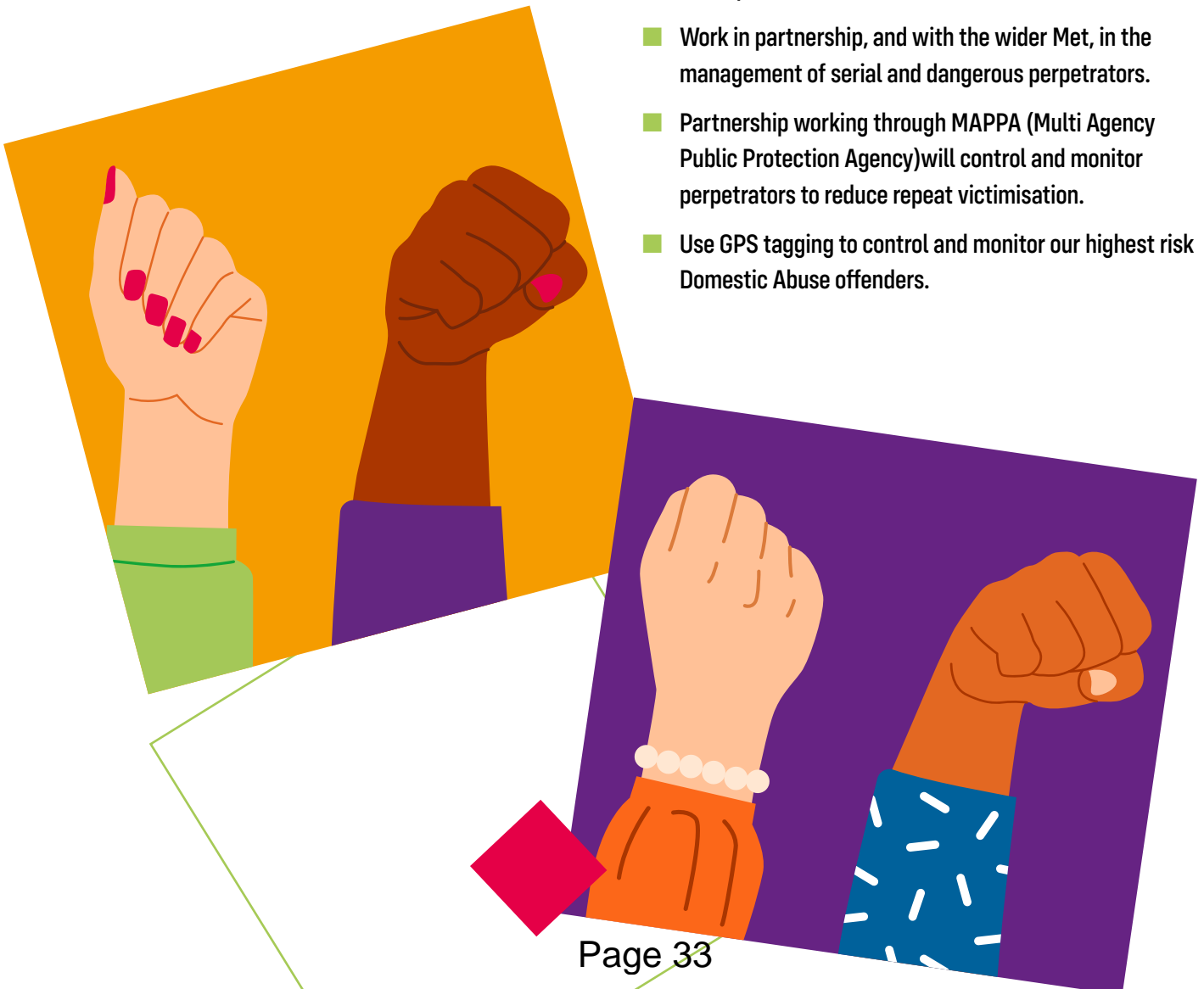
Ambition: Implementing effective systems and interventions for working with perpetrators or those at risk of becoming perpetrators (hold perpetrators to account)

Ending VAWG can only happen if perpetrators stop their abuse.

Where abuse does happen, perpetrators must be brought to justice. We will continue to ensure that effective sanctions are taken against perpetrators, and that they are prevented from influencing children and other vulnerable people from becoming perpetrators in turn.

We will:

- Increase the number of perpetrators brought to justice for violence against women and girls.
- Improve processes and victim care across the criminal justice system to reduce the number of cases failing.
- Reduce repeat victimisation of women and girls.
- Increase women's confidence in the police so as to improve the reporting of crimes which disproportionately affect women and girls within London.
- See an increase in reporting to police, but a decrease in women being abused, i.e. the proportion of women experiencing these crimes in each year (measured through reporting in the Crime Survey in England and Wales); and
- Work in partnership, and with the wider Met, in the management of serial and dangerous perpetrators.
- Partnership working through MAPPA (Multi Agency Public Protection Agency) will control and monitor perpetrators to reduce repeat victimisation.
- Use GPS tagging to control and monitor our highest risk Domestic Abuse offenders.



PARTNERSHIP OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORT VICTIMS, SURVIVORS AND THEIR CHILDREN

Ambition: For women and girls to feel safer and be safer within the borough

Working with partners, we aim to reassure women and girls in public spaces and protect them from victimisation. We will increase our understanding of key locations where women feel unsafe and work with partners to design-in safety, as well as increase police visibility and enforcement in these hotspots.

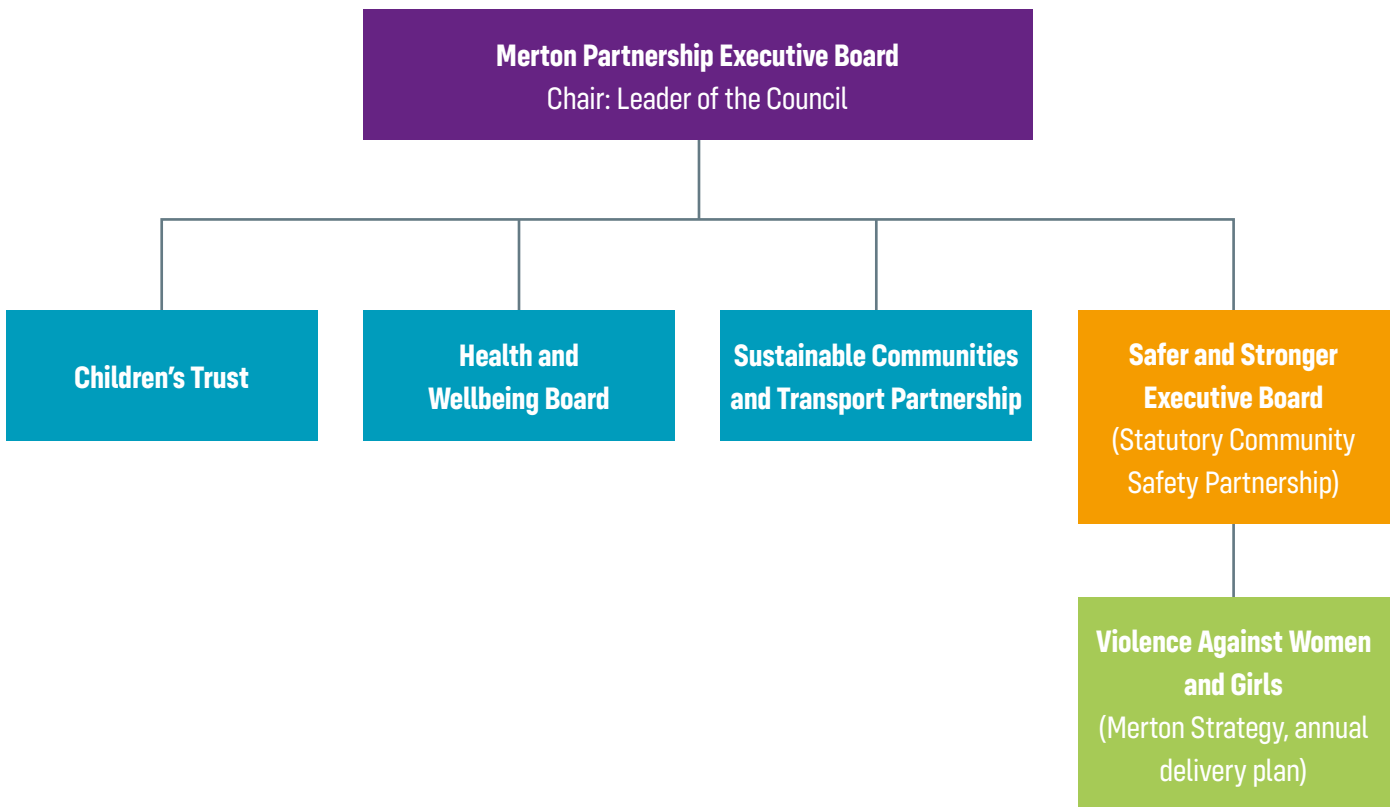
We will:

- We will review and look at improve our public spaces in the borough.
- We will work with licenced premises to ensure they are keeping women safe.
- We will provide a communication plan.
- We will expand the Ask for Angela campaign, working with Safer Sounds and bars, clubs and other night time-economy venues. This will build on the comprehensive Welfare and Vulnerability Engagement (WAVE) training to frontline officers that took place in venues across London in the summer.
- We will promote the Mayor's Women's Night Safety Charter and encourage businesses to sign up.
- Have a violence against women and girls problem profile within the Police to drive problem solving.
- Include violence against women and girls sector organisations in their key partnerships, known as a key individual network.
- Work in partnership to tackle identified violence against women and girls concerns.
- Work in partnership, and with the wider Met, in the management of serial and dangerous perpetrators.



GOVERNANCE

This strategy will be overseen by Merton's VAWG Strategic Board – a sub group of Merton's Safer and Stronger Executive board (the statutory board overseeing delivery of Merton's Community Safety Partnership, which includes a priority on responding to and preventing violence against women and girls)



APPENDIX 1: LIST OF SERVICES WITHIN MERTON



Victim Support

who provides the Merton Independent Domestic Violence Advocate service and manages the One Stop Shop



Hestia

who provide Merton's refuge accommodation for women



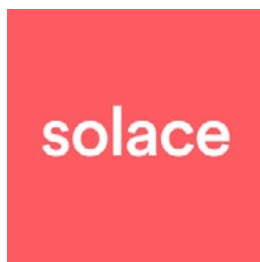
The Salvation Army

who provides The Link Café for victims



Refuge

who provide Merton's Complex Needs Independent Domestic Violence Advocate service



Solace

who provide a pan London service for victims and survivors of domestic abuse



Women in Prison

who provide a Pan London service and work in Merton supporting Women who have been in prison or at risk of going to prison

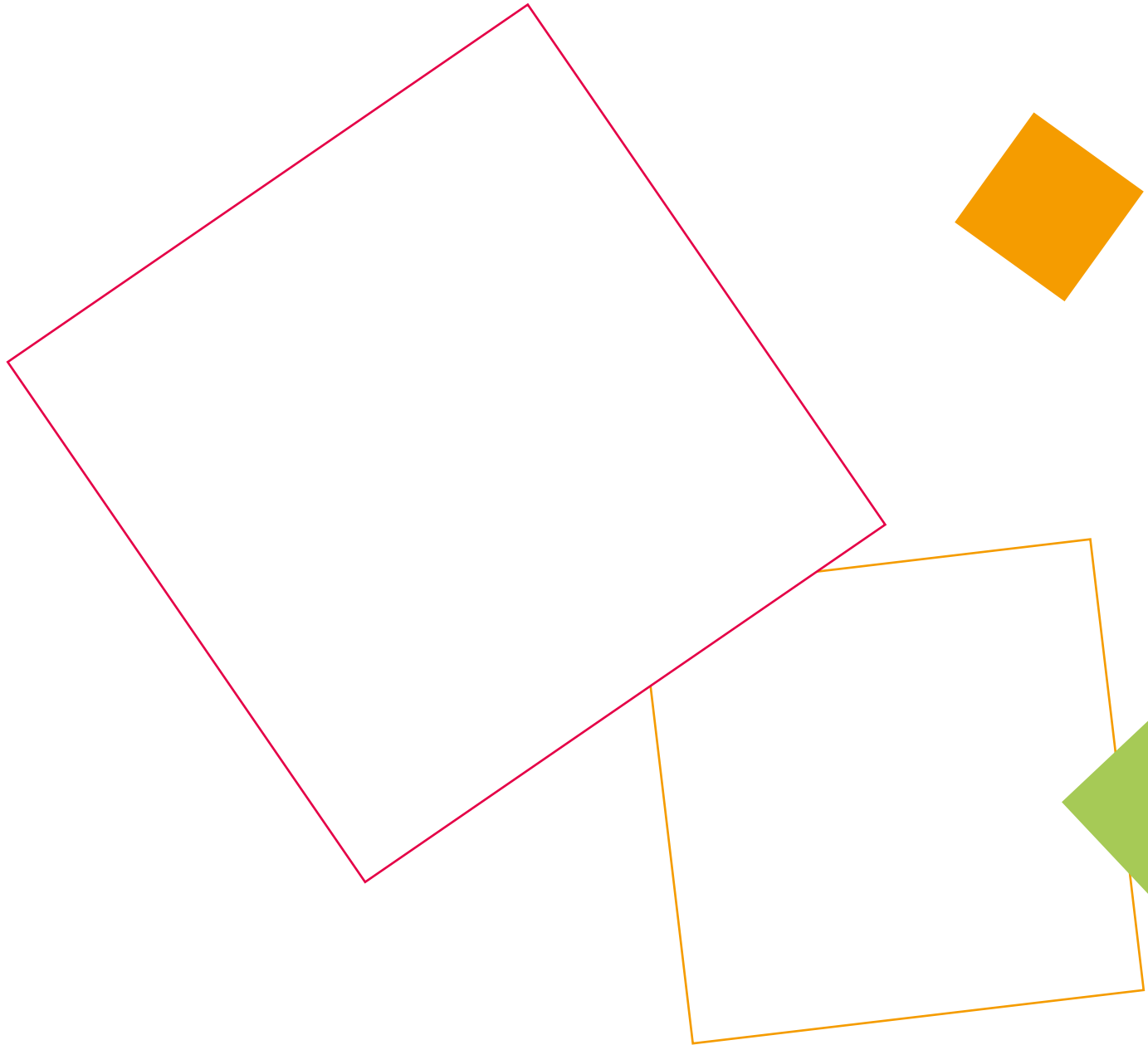


Inner Strength Network

supporting women and girls and their families to overcome difficult moments in their lives.

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASB	Anti-Social Behaviour
SWLMHT	South West London Mental Health Trust
MSAB	Merton Safeguarding Adults Board
MSCB	Merton Safeguarding Children Board
ICB	Integrated Care Board
CJS	Criminal Justice System
DA	Domestic Abuse
IDVA	Independent Domestic Violence Advisor
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender
MARAC	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference
MOPAC	Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime
MPS	Metropolitan Police Service
NHS	National Health Service
SSEB	Safer & Stronger Executive Board
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
VCS	Voluntary and Community Sector



MERTON'S ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS

Strategy 2022 – 2025

This strategy produced by Safer Merton, Merton's Community Safety team in partnership with the Violence Against Women and Girls strategic board and partners.

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/crime-prevention-and-community-safety/safer-merton>

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/crime-prevention-and-community-safety/domestic-violence>

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/crime-prevention-and-community-safety/vawg>

Overview and Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2023/24



This table sets out the draft Overview and Scrutiny Commission's Work Programme for 2023/24 following discussions at the topic workshop on 7 June 2023.

The work programme will be considered at every meeting of the Commission to enable it to respond to issues of concern or to request new pre-decision items ahead of their consideration by Cabinet/Council.

Chair: Cllr Edward Foley
Vice-chair: Cllr Mike Brunt

Scrutiny Support

For further information on the work programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission please contact: -
Rosie McKeever, Scrutiny Officer
Tel: 020 8545 4035; Email: rosie.mckeever@merton.gov.uk

For more information about overview and scrutiny at LB Merton, please visit www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny

Meeting date: ~~5 July 2023~~ (**Deadline for papers:** 5pm, 26 June 2023)

Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
Executive Director introductions	Verbal update with Q&A	Dan Jones (ED Environment, Civic Pride and Climate) Polly Cziok (ED Innovation & Change) Asad Mushtaq (ED Finance & Digital)	To understand current priorities in relation to Panel work programme
Scrutiny Annual Report	Report	Cllr Ed Foley, Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Commission	
Scrutiny Member Survey	Report	Cllr Ed Foley, Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Commission	
Identify questions for the Borough Commander	Discussion	Cllr Ed Foley, Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Commission	Plan line of questioning for 6 September meeting
Overview and Scrutiny Commission work programme 23/24	Report	Cllr Ed Foley Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Commission	Discuss and approve work programme and re-establishment of the FMTG

Meeting date: 6 September 2022 (~~**Deadline for papers:** 5pm, 28 August 2022~~)

Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
Questions to the Leader of the Council - priorities and challenges for 2023/24	Verbal update with Q&A	Cllr Ross Garrod, Leader of the Council;	To understand current priorities in relation to Panel work programme
BCU Commander – crime and policing in Merton	Report and in-depth discussion	BCU Commander	To hold BCU Commander to account on crime and disorder. (Include Community Policing)
Safer Merton - Antisocial Behaviour	Report	Community Safety Team, Katy Saunders, Megan Hatton	Report to focus on ASB and Knife Crime (Include graffiti and vandalism)
Scrutiny Member Survey	Report	Cllr Edward Foley	Results of survey
Work programme 2023/24	Written report	Rosie McKeever, Scrutiny Officer	To agree the work programme.

Meeting date: 29 November 2023 (**Deadline for papers:** 5pm, 20 November 2023)

Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
Business Plan - budget update	Report	Asad Mushtaq, Executive Director of Finance & Digital	
Cabinet Member priorities	Report	Cllr Eleanor Stringer, Cabinet Member for Civic Pride Cllr Billy Christie, Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services	
Customer Service and the Council Website		Sean Cunniffe, Head of Customer Contact	
Work programme 2023/24	Written report	Rosie McKeever, Scrutiny Officer	To agree the work programme

Meeting date: 31 January 2024 (**Deadline for papers:** 5pm, 22 January 2024)

Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
Business Plan Update – budget scrutiny	Report – common pack for Panels and Commission	Asad Mushtaq, Executive Director of Finance & Digital	To report to Cabinet on budget scrutiny
Scrutiny of the Business Plan; comments and recommendations from the overview and scrutiny panels	Report	Asad Mushtaq, Executive Director of Finance & Digital	To send comments and recommendations from the overview and scrutiny panels to Cabinet
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion strategy	Report	Susan Botros, Interim Equalities & Community Cohesion Lead	
Identify questions for the Borough Commander	Discussion	Cllr Ed Foley Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Commission	Plan line of questioning for meeting on 26 February
Work programme 2023/24	Written report	Rosie McKeever, Scrutiny Officer	To agree the work programme.

Meeting date: 26 February 2024 (*Deadline for papers: 5pm, 16 February 2024*)

Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
BCU Commander – crime and policing in Merton	Report	BCU Commander	To hold BCU Commander to account on crime and disorder. (Include Community Policing)
Safer Merton - VAWG Strategy / Safety of women & girls	Report	Safer Merton	Include lighting
Work programme 2023/24	Written report	Rosie McKeever, Scrutiny Officer	To agree the work programme

Meeting date: 13 March 2024 (*Deadline for papers: 5pm, 4 March 2024*)

Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
Delivery of the Civic Pride fund		Cllr Eleanor Stringer, Cabinet Member for Civic Pride, Keith Burns	Voluntary Sector focus
Night-time Strategy	Report	Sarah Xavier	
Planning the Commission's 2024/25 work programme	Report	Cllr Ed Foley Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Commission	To review 2023/24 and suggest ideas for 2024/25

Page 45

MOVED TO NEXT YEAR

People and Culture Plan	Report	Peter Little, Head of Organisational Development	The People and Culture Plan was put on hold last year pending the work on values and on the development of the new change programme. No update as yet.
Decision Making: Review the current structure of the scrutiny panels and restructure to re-align with new directors.	Report	Scrutiny Team	Moved due to scrutiny capacity

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