

Women's Safety Action Plan

Recommendation 1

The council and its strategic partners to collaborate to improve the level of women's awareness on the local offer of help available that directly support women's safety on the streets.

Comments from Service:

A new ambitious campaign to tackle sexual harassment and misogyny in the Nighttime Economy was launched in Dec 23 – called Don't Cross the Line. It is a cross border collaboration with LB Hackney and the City of London. It is in response to the rise in misogynistic behaviours in the night-time economy since the pandemic. Social media content online in relation to the night time economy targeted at young men may often encourage misogynistic views. In 2023 we trained over 1600 nightlife staff in 2023 which has seen incident reports go up for what was previously considered "low level" offences. These were significantly underreported. This increased reporting is extremely positive, however, longer term awareness raising is needed to challenge the behaviours themselves. The campaign messaging is directed at men using male role models to challenge misogynistic behaviour, male 'entitlement' and negative views about women which have created permissive environments and enabled unsafe spaces for women. The campaign and its messaging was developed working with focus groups of men who live locally and use the night-time economy in Tower Hamlets/Hackney/City of London.

Mainstreaming Violence Against Women and Girls - The Council's new Statement of Licensing Policy 2023-2028 was agreed by full Council on 27th September 2023. The policy states that the borough expects licence holders to take a zero-tolerance approach to misogyny within their venues and mainstreams considerations in relation to women's safety and VAWG challenges.

A series of in person "Women's Safety Walks" were offered to all residents to share their concerns on public safety issues across the borough. There was low attendance. Based on feedback from women a series of 'digital safety walks' across the borough were created. These were very successful and had much better attendance and involvement from women and girls. All 20 wards

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were covered with group and one-one sessions offered. Each concern or issue raised was either flagged as an action for a response across the relevant service areas i.e., parks, public realm, community safety or the planning team/s.

In addition, a local research report on gender inclusive design has been written - led by planning but facilitated and in collaboration with community safety. This research and work engaged with over 300 women and girls across Tower Hamlets. This report was initially envisaged as a 'Women's Safety' Project. It was set up in the light of the tragic murders of Sarah Everard, Biba Henry, Nicole Smallman, Sabina Nessa and many others whose stories may not have received national coverage. Horrific acts of misogyny, which shone a light on the precarity women face both on streets and in public spaces and within a legal and judicial system that empowers men to act against women. The writing of this report contains original research and accounts from women and girls across Tower Hamlets. The report maps out the scope of the findings and makes a series of recommendations to ensure greater balance and representation in the planning and design of the borough. The report provides insights into the evidence base and the source of the series of recommendations can be traced through the original research with women and girls in the borough. This document is being used to inform the local plan and have been aggregated throughout the plan with input into each policy strand. The report includes recommendations for other services and directorates across the council and could be used by VAWG team, Youth Service and strategic planning for public health, High Streets, parks and green spaces, leisure and planning for new developments. The report sets out a 'vision' which has been devised in response the evidence base. A set of design themes that flow from the vision and outline specific recommendations.

With regard the VAWG Open Space, the local police held the first Innovation hub, a collaborative approach to problem solving, where police explored ways to improve women's safety and rebuild trust and confidence. The police worked with the local authority, Transport for London, various charities, and repeat victims. The police delivered welfare, vulnerability and engagement training to businesses to generate ideas on how to mitigate the associated risks. This is co-funded and co-hosted by both Hackney and Tower Hamlets. Locally, police deliver walk and talk events, and until recently a 'ride a long' experience (currently paused). Police also run regular events at Riverside Hostel which has been well received.

Given issues of safety in the night time economy a priority has been given to VAWG work. This includes a digital media campaign and QR codes displayed on a mobile messaging van and deployed with key messaging related to drink spiking, Ask for Angela, and the Look Up Look Out (anti robbery campaign).

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The Aldgate Connect Business Improvement District and the councils (City of London and LBTH) have formed partnership of the Met Police, City of London Police, City of London Corporation, LBTH and businesses to develop a collaborative business engagement campaign signposting to resources and information relevant for their employees, businesses and colleagues. The campaign name is **Safer Paths**.

It's a long-term umbrella initiative that aims to tackle violence against women & girls, trialled first within Aldgate and City of London districts through a collaborative and engaging communications campaign. The Safer Paths campaign will have a range of touchpoints and outputs that helps to:

- Support businesses offering guidance and advice from local authorities.
- Signpost support opportunities for any vulnerable individuals.
- Highlight nearby safe venues and organisations for anyone feeling unsafe in the City of London.
- Showcase **#SaferPaths** approved businesses within the City of London that can offer support & guidance.
- Raise awareness of venues who deploy night-time safety schemes – e.g., Ask for Angela, WAVE.
- Reverse the perception of 'unsafeness' through careful empowerment messaging.

The establishment of a Women's Resource Centre is one of the mayor's priority projects. The objective of the centre is to provide a safe space for learning, development and support for women as part of addressing the equity challenges for marginalised women including victims of domestic abuse and especially Bangladeshi women. Local data suggests Bangladeshi women continue to be marginalised and face economic, health, social and gender inequalities disproportionately.

The exclusive centre for women and girls will the opportunity to seek support in a centre carefully designed to meet their needs including an on-site creche facility to support childcare arrangements. The centre will be based in a gated location between Osmani School and Osmani Trust, set within a mile of the former Jagonari Women's Education and Resource Centre. In addition to the learning and development courses that will be delivered from the site, the centre will also provide a vital advice base for VAWG and other public health concerns affecting women such as women's safety in public spaces.

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Action	Owner(s)	Completion date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an anti-sexual harassment campaign with Hackney Council and City of London. 	Stacey Bradburne, VAWG Coordinator, LBTH	November 2023 <i>Completed</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensing Policy includes requirements for all licensed premises in LBTH to actively not tolerate misogyny in their venues. 	Tom Lewis, Licensing and Safety Team Leader, LBTH	December 2023 <i>Completed</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's Safety Walks occur regularly to provide an opportunity for female residents to share concerns over specific areas in LBTH 	Joshuah Codjoe, Neighbourhood Safety Manager, LBTH	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's Safety in Public Spaces Consultation recommendations published 	Jennie Savage, Public Realm Project Officer, LBTH	October 2023 <i>Completed</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police try to improve their relationship and build trust with women and girls 	DI Yasmin Lalani - MPS	Ongoing Met Police New VAWG Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police target perpetrators within the night-time economy 	DI Yasmin Lalani - MPS	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Aldgate Connect Business Improvement District's Safer Paths will launch Q1 2024 with a microsite, a business communication (print and digital) and internal posters of awareness of safety champions and anti-misogyny messaging. The collaborative 'Safer Paths' campaign is around safety, reassurance and business awareness of how employers can have agency in combatting VAWG. The campaign promotes gentle messaging, business advice with wayfinding, solidarity and community being central to combatting VAWG and hate crime. • Phase 2 will be the roll out of awareness of Safer Paths venues (safe havens) staff training and other campaign roll out activities like fun runs etc. 	Menara Ahmed, Senior VAWG and Hate Crime Manager and Zoe Barwick, BID Director, Aldgate Business Connect	<p>Phase 1: Launch business booklet and toolkit for businesses in Q1 2024.</p> <p>Ongoing promotion and awareness raising through 2024</p> <p>2024 campaign KPIs will be worked but through a safety partnership working</p>

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		group coordinated by the Aldgate BID.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Growth & Economic Development team organised an open day, providing an opportunity for the boroughs Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to drop in and meet with business facing services in the council. VAWG team present to engage with smaller businesses across the borough and promote awareness of the VAWG agenda 	Lucy Collins – Business Liaison Manager, Growth & Economic Development, LBTH	November 2023 <i>Completed</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Growth & Economic Development to deliver an event targeting LBTH corporate organisations to join up community/charity/third sector offers to corporates. VAWG to be present to engage with Corporates. Details to be agreed 	Lucy Collins, Business Liaison Manager, Growth & Economic Development, LBTH	March 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mayor's Priority Project: Establishment of a Women's Resource Centre. The Corporate Strategy and Communities team are leading the establishment of a new women's resource centre in the borough. This centre will serve as a learning, development, capacity building and wellbeing resource for marginalised women. 	Afazul Hoque, Head of Corporate Strategy and Communities Syeda Hassan, Voluntary and Community Sector Development Officer	September 2024
<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>The Council to review its current funding arrangements and strongly consider increasing the capacity to support women's groups that provide domestic abuse (DA) services to the community.</p>		
<p>Comments from Service:</p> <p>The Director of Public Health has committed to £475,000 per annum from the Public Health grant for re-commissioning of the domestic abuse casework service. Contract has gone to tender in 2023.</p> <p>The Current Refuge Provision comprises of 34 bed spaces, a generic refuge and BAMER specific refuge. This is currently being reviewed and re-commissioned.</p>		

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<p>The 'Safer Paths' Campaign promotes gentle messaging around the topic with wayfinding, solidarity and community being central to combatting VAWG and hate crime.</p>		
Action	Owner(s)	Completion date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioning of domestic abuse casework service with £475,000 funding committed per annum for next three years. 	<p>Menara Ahmed, Senior VAWG and Hate Crime Manager, LBTH</p>	<p>March 2024</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Aldgate Connect Business Improvement District and the collaborative 'Safer Paths' campaign around safety, reassurance and business awareness of how employers can have agency in combatting VAWG. The campaign promotes gentle messaging around the topic with wayfinding, solidarity and community being central to combatting VAWG and hate crime. 	<p>Zoe Barwick, BID Director, Aldgate Business Connect, Menara Ahmed, Senior VAWG and Hate Crime Manager</p>	<p>December 2023 and ongoing</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support community campaigns such as safe havens, fun runs and safer walking routes developed through this wider partnership Safer Paths work. 	<p>Zoe Barwick, BID Director, Aldgate Business Connect</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>The Council to ensure that it factors in improving self-defence access for women and girls when considering leisure, public health and physical wellbeing activities.</p>		
<p>Comments from Service: In keeping with our Women's Safety theme, we are partnering with our Physical Activity Team, and have commissioned them to deliver 2 self-defence classes each week for 18 months. This gives women access to physical and mental health & wellbeing classes, leisure and it has a positive impact on public health. We have also included the VAWG Team training courses, which the council offers for free, to ensure that we are educating and empowering our local female business owners and employees with knowledge on VAWG issues which may affect them. We are targeting all the businesses within the town centre and its central activity zone which is included for the purpose of the programme. This has approximately 400 businesses.</p>		

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<p>The Sports Team are currently seeking funding to develop a sports programme for women and girls to celebrate International Women's Day.</p> <p>The in-housing of the leisure services is under development and further information will be available soon regarding any opportunities around women safety.</p>		
Action	Owner(s)	Completion date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whitechapel Town Centre commission self-defence classes for local businesses. 	Bridget Galloway, Whitechapel Town Centre Manager, LBTH	March 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VAWG Days of Action for local businesses to encourage take up of VAWG training and awareness sessions. 	Bridget Galloway, Whitechapel Town Centre Manager, LBTH	March 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sports Team to create calendar of sporting activities for women and girls 	Lisa Pottinger, Head of Sports/Physical Activity, LBTH	April 2024
<p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>The council's Children and Education Service to support increasing capacity at schools on raising awareness of domestic abuse (DA) and support available.</p> <p>Comments from Service: Schools are continually offered support with training and changing policies around VAWG and misogyny in schools.</p>		
Action	Owner(s)	Completion date

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-VAWG pledge and support promoted to schools to educate staff, parents and governors about VAWG. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Amy-Kate Garwood, VAWG Training and Awareness Officer, LBTH</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Ongoing</p>
<p>Recommendation 5</p>		
<p>The Council and Residential Social Landlord (RSL) partners should actively strengthen their partnership workings to focus on tackling women safety issues on RSL estates.</p>		
<p>Comments from Service:</p> <p>It is recommended that all Registered Social Landlords improve their response to victims of domestic abuse through Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance Accreditation – this is the national benchmark of good practice for RSLs.</p> <p>Good practice recommendations letter sent to Housing teams and registered providers of social housing via TH Housing Management Forum and Executive Board to encourage improvement of their response to victims of domestic abuse by going through Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation.</p>		
<p>Action</p>	<p>Owner(s)</p>	<p>Completion date</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send letter of good practice recommendations to TH Housing Management Forum and Executive Board Chair for circulation to all RPSH's • Support RPSH's with good practice recommendations where requested. 	<p>Menara Ahmed, Senior VAWG and Hate Crime Manager, LBTH</p>	<p>October 2023 and ongoing</p>
<p>Recommendation 6</p>		
<p>The Police/THEOs to actively target and focus their recruitment and retention strategy to reflect recruiting representative women from the community in Tower Hamlets.</p>		
<p>Comments from Service:</p>		

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An inclusive recruitment campaign was designed by the community safety working alongside HR, Trade Unions, the Women's Staff Network, Account3, Female THEOs, the VAWG Team and other female members of staff within the organisation. This design work was to identify and understand any barriers to women joining the THEO service. Some of the work that followed included "Women only Open Evenings" and bespoke presentations from women who are currently carrying out the THEO role. On the first phase of recruitment several women were shortlisted and attended the recruitment and inclusive selection day/s. In the first tranche of recruitment 4 women were successfully recruited into the THEO service. Other tranches of recruitment are to follow.

Action	Owner(s)	Completion date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> THEO inclusive campaign and recruitment targeted under-represented minorities, including women so that women felt represented on the streets of LBTH. 	Joanne Woodgates, Enforcement Team Leader, LBTH	December 2023 <i>Ongoing</i>

Recommendation 7

All Tower Hamlets Councillors (Male and Female) to support and champion women's safety issues through the established channels such as 'male allies' programme, women safety focussed walkabouts and building this within the roles when engaging the public within the constituencies and member surgeries.

Comments from Service: All councillors have been offered the VAWG Champions and male allyship training programme. This can be delivered in person or virtually.

Action	Owner(s)	Completion date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VAWG Champions training offered to all Tower Hamlets Councillors. 	Stacey Bradburne, VAWG Coordinator, LBTH	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VAWG Champions training offered through the 'Safer Paths' Campaign as part of the rollout (phase 2) 	Zoe Barwick, BID Director, Aldgate Business Connect	Ongoing