

Serious Violence and Exploitation Strategy

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

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Foreword

We are pleased to introduce the Tower Hamlets Serious Violence Duty (SVD) Strategic Partnership Plan 2024-2027, which sets out the multi-agency serious violence priorities for duty holders over the next three years. This plan focuses on exploitation and the violent crimes that are of most concern locally: identified through our strategic needs assessment and consultation with our local residents. This is to ensure resident voices are heard and effectively responded to.

We know that the impact of violence and the associated exploitation is vast, affecting victims, their families and the wider public. This is why we act on the needs of our residents, consulting, understanding and implementing the appropriate services and initiatives to ensure Tower Hamlets remains a safe place to live, work in and visit.

In Tower Hamlets, we have placed a strong focus on tackling violence and exploitation: funding a dedicated exploitation team that provides detached youth work in locations of risk across the borough; a dedicated Violence Against Women and Girls service; and making use of Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) funding and partnership spend on violence reduction.

We already have examples of success that we will build upon to ensure professionals and local people can identify what we are currently doing and what we strive to achieve in our ambitions to tackle and reduce serious violence and exploitation.

This plan describes how we will make the best use of resources to make our communities safer; working together to reduce the impact of violence and exploitation by empowering communities and addressing the risk factors that can lead to being a victim or perpetrator of violence and exploitation.

It is important we are all working towards the same goals, providing a safe environment for residents, businesses, and visitors. This strategy demonstrates how The Council, Police and the wider partnership will address the complexities involved in violence reduction, and the Tower Hamlets Community Safety Partnership will adopt a joined-up approach to set out and achieve our goals.

The priorities and key objectives set out in this plan are based upon an assessment of violence and related exploitation issues across the borough, and reflect the views of the community. We hope this document helps you understand what duty holders will be delivering in partnership and how we will achieve the aims set out through our priorities.




Image of Cllr




Image of BCU
Commander




Image of Mayor

Introduction

This Strategy has been produced as part of the requirements of the Serious Violence Duty, introduced by the Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. The duty places several requirements upon local areas, including agreeing a local partnership arrangement to lead on delivering the duty; agreeing a definition of serious violence; having consistent data sharing; producing a Strategic Needs Assessment; and production of a strategy to set out how duty holders will tackle serious violence locally.

The duty requires responsible authorities to work together to prevent and reduce serious violence, including identifying the kinds of serious violence that occur in the area, the causes of that violence, and to prepare and implement a strategy for preventing and reducing serious violence.

The responsible authorities (also known as 'duty holders') in the Serious Violence Duty are:

- the police
- fire and rescue authorities
- justice organisations (youth offending teams and probation services)
- health bodies (Integrated Care Boards)
- the local authority

Wider partners such as educational institutions, prisons and youth custodial institutions have a duty to co-operate with duty holders, but they are not duty holders.

This strategy considers guidance issued by the central government, Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) guidance, in collaboration with London Councils, the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, the Metropolitan Police, NHS London and Probation Service.

The strategy sets out the agreed definition of Serious Violence for the borough, summarises the key aspects of the Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment, the partnership arrangements that have been agreed locally to lead on delivery of the duty, the areas of activity to prevent and reduce serious violence, and activity to engage with voluntary sector organisations, communities - including young people, as well as businesses.

Tackling serious violence (including VAWG and Hate Crime related serious violence) remains a key priority for Tower Hamlets and is a concern for our residents. The Council and its partners continue to invest in addressing violence and exploitation, as well as the associated risk factors that contribute to children, young people and young adults becoming involved with serious violence.

Serious Violence Definition

The Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 provides that, for the purposes of the Duty, serious violence includes domestic abuse, sexual offences, violence against property and threats of violence, but does not include terrorism.

Serious Violence for the purposes of the Serious Violence Duty in Tower Hamlets, is defined as:

“Any violence and exploitation affecting young people under the age of 25, domestic abuse, sexual violence and hate crime. Within the context of these types of violence, it encompasses homicide, grievous bodily harm, actual bodily harm, rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault, personal robbery, threats to kill and violence against property caused during the commission of one of these offences.”

Domestic abuse is as defined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

A Within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021:

1) This section defines “domestic abuse” for the purposes of this Act. (2) Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if— (a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are “personally connected” to each other, and (b) the behaviour is abusive. (3) Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following— (a) physical or sexual abuse; (b) violent or threatening behaviour; (c) controlling or coercive behaviour; (d) economic abuse (see subsection (4)); (e) psychological, emotional or other abuse; and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

(4) “Economic abuse” means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B’s ability to — (a) acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or (b) obtain goods or services.

(5) For the purposes of this Act, A’s behaviour may be behaviour “towards” B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B’s child).

(6) References in this Act to being abusive towards another person are to be read in accordance with this section. (7) For the meaning of “personally connected”,

It should be noted that in Chapter 3 of the Statutory Guidance of the act, it recognises that domestic abuse can encompass a range of behaviours, including abuse that is physical, violent or threatening behaviour, sexual abuse, controlling & coercive behaviour, harassment or stalking, economic abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, verbal abuse, technology-facilitated based, abuse relating to faith, ‘honour’-based abuse, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

B Regarding ‘violence and exploitation affecting young people under the age of 25,’ this includes those aged under 25 who are victims of offences; suspects for offences; or both. (aligned to home office Home Office “definition” of serious violence in their 2018 strategy)

C Serious violence includes (but does not require) any of the defined offences where a knife, section one firearm or corrosive substance is used, threatened or intimidated.

Local Partnership Arrangements

The Serious Violence Duty (SVD) sets out the requirement for specified authorities to decide on the appropriate lead and structure for collaboration for the local area. Government guidance references various partnership bodies as potentially appropriate SVD governance leads: Community Safety Partnerships; Health and Wellbeing Boards; and Local Safeguarding Children's Partnerships. The guidance also poses the potential for collaboration via several partnership structures, depending on the preference and local context.

The London Guidance recommends that the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) be the local partnership to lead on the borough's implementation and compliance with the SVD. In Tower Hamlets, we have opted to follow the London guidance: with the CSP being the agreed partnership forum to lead and implement the recommendations under the SVD.

Tower Hamlets Community Safety Partnership

The Tower Hamlets Community Safety Partnership (CSP) is a statutory requirement of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998: working in partnership to address local issues including antisocial behaviour, drug or alcohol misuse, and re-offending.

This strategic forum operates on the basis that no single agency can address complex community safety issues alone, and that these issues can be tackled more effectively through partnership working.

The partnership is made up of both statutory agencies and co-operating bodies within the borough (known as the 'responsible authorities'), including:

- The Metropolitan Police,
- Tower Hamlets Local Authority,
- London Fire Brigade,
- North-East London (NEL) NHS, and
- National Probation Service

Co-operating bodies include the London Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) as well as key local partners with a vested interest in community safety, including Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Services.

The Community Safety Partnership links in with other strategic partnership boards such as the SCPB, Combating Drugs Partnership (CDP), HWB and SAB: through board chair representation at the CSP. Cross-thematic agendas are discussed at the CSP (including violence reduction and implementing a Public Health response to violence reduction).

For more information on Tower Hamlets Community Safety Partnership, visit the Tower Hamlets website via the link provided [here](#).

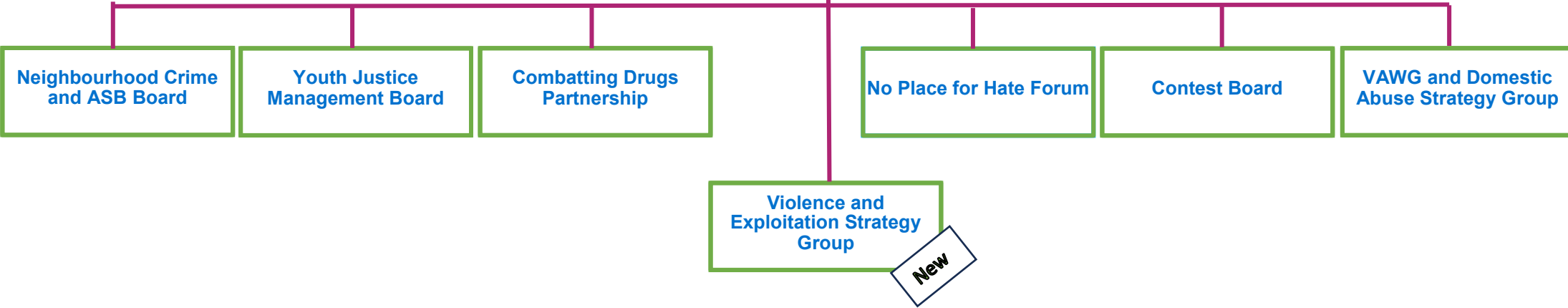
Governance Structure

In Tower Hamlets, we ensure the Safer Neighbourhood Board operates alongside our CSP so that our local community is considered and can contribute when making strategic decision.

Community Safety Partnership Executive

Community Safety Partnership

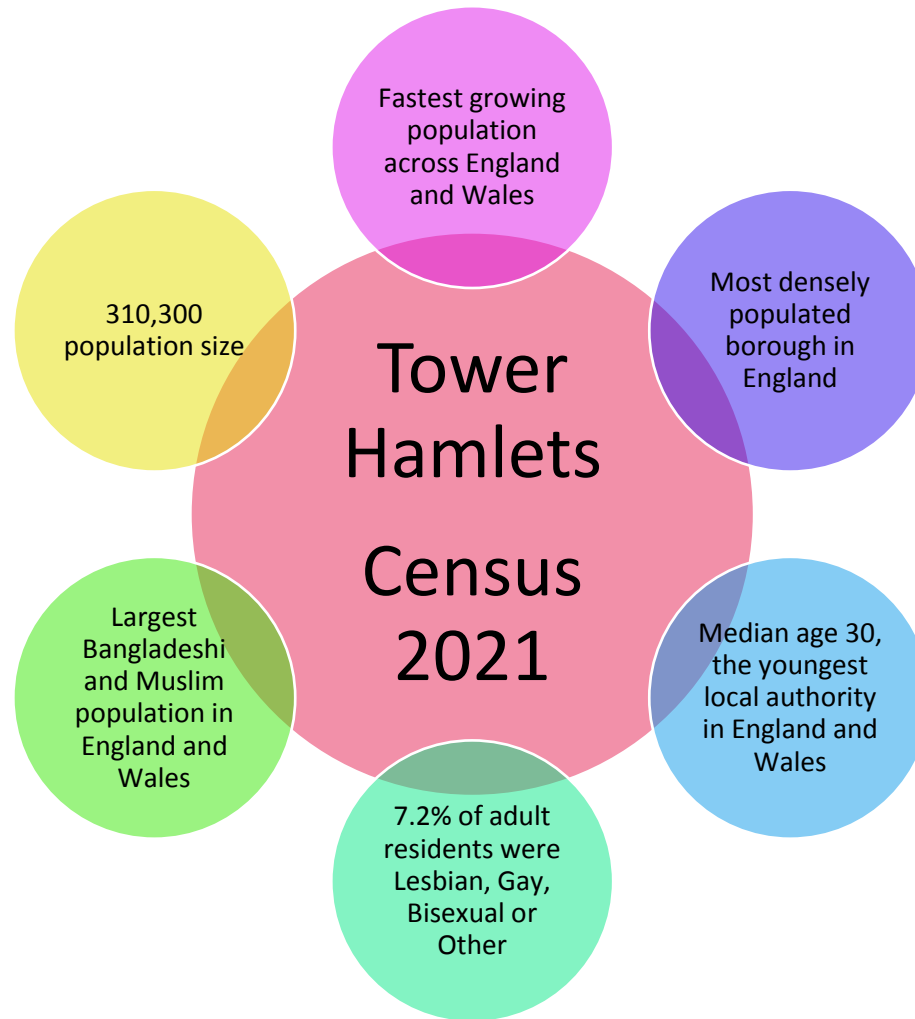
Safer Neighbourhood Board



The CSP has eight strategic subgroups to drive the operational delivery. These are:

- Neighbourhood Crime and ASB Board
- Combatting Drugs Partnership
- No Place for Hate Forum
- CONTEST Board
- VAWG and Domestic Abuse Strategy Group
- Youth Justice Management Board
- Violence and Exploitation Strategy Group

Tower Hamlets Community Profile



Tower Hamlets has the 4th highest proportion of males in England and Wales

Tower Hamlets is ranked 16th most ethnically diverse local authority in England

Tower Hamlets has an overall deprivation score of 27.9: higher than both the London (21.8) and England (21.7) values

73% of residents reported in the Census 2021, that English is their main spoken language, however 6.2% of residents reported that they don't speak English well or at all

What Have We Achieved

Tower Hamlets recorded 1041 Sexual Offences for the period 2022-2023; a decrease of 9.32% (109 offences) when compared to the previous year.

Violence figures (if a reduction)

Tower Hamlets recorded 4331 incidents of Domestic Abuse for the period 2022-2023; a slight decrease of 1.34% (59 incidents) when compared to the previous year.

The Community MARAC identifies cuckooing and drug misuse cases presented to the panel: the second and third highest contributing risk/vulnerability factors of all cases between 2018-2023.

Operation Continuum continues to prove an impactful initiative in tackling the supply of drugs: resulting in 114 warrants being executed, 112 arrests and 72 people charged with drug trafficking offences

During National Hate Crime Awareness Week 2022, the council and partners delivered 21 partnership activities to show Hate Crime is not welcomed or tolerated in Tower Hamlets

Young people entering the Youth Criminal Justice System for the first time, saw a 45.95% reduction in 2022 when compared to the previous year

Serious Violence Needs Assessment Summary Findings

The Serious Violence Needs Assessment identified that key risk factors for violence and exploitation include high levels of local deprivation, high demands for drugs and existing drug markets.

Exposure to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) such as parental substance misuse, being a victim or being exposed to abuse or violence, having undiagnosed speech, language and communication needs, along with school exclusions and truancy were key risk factors identified for being affected by serious violence and exploitation.

Evidence links deprivation, violence and exploitation with Tower Hamlets the 6th most deprived borough in London based on the Crime domain based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IoMD).

There are high demands for drugs and drug markets in the borough that are driving violence and exploitation in the borough.

Suspensions from all schools in Tower Hamlets shows that those suspended are more likely to be boys, and in secondary school particularly in year groups 8-11.

Evidence shows links between speech, language and communications needs and offending: with a lower percentage of children achieving school readiness for communication and language skills in TH compared to London and England

The majority of victims of child criminal exploitation (CCE) demonstrated experience/exposure to several risk factors. 75% of victims had additional vulnerabilities including poor mental health, learning difficulties or past experiences of abuse

34% of local Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) reports in Tower Hamlets, fall into the 'online' category: the most prevalent category for CSE reports

Violent offences reported to the police saw peaks at 9am for under 18s and fall in August/December: possibly linked to school hours and holidays.

The most serious violence offences saw peaks in the evening and in the East of the borough (Bow, Mile End, Isle of dogs, Poplar).

What Did Our Local Residents Tell Us?

- Resident's Survey
- SVD consultation – including voice of children and young people
- SVD survey

Our Approach

We are committed to delivering a joined up approach to tackling serious violence: addressing not only the offending behaviour, but also the contributing risk factors and underlying issues that affect violence and the associated exploitation.

There are a number of principles and cross-cutting themes that this strategy will embed in the approach to addressing serious violence and exploitation:

Public Health Approach

Focus on early intervention and prevention, and the wider determinants of crime and community safety, including social inequalities, employment, skills, health, housing and environment. This approach ensures the partnership does not view violence as a series of isolated incidents or solely a police law enforcement problem, but as a preventable consequence of a range of underlying factors.

Contextual Safeguarding

Focus on contextual safeguarding, taking a whole-family approach and accounting for every context and environment that adolescents encounter beyond their family. This involves adopting a trauma-informed approach, using a local understanding of the impact that adverse childhood experiences have on involvement in crime & ASB

Collaboration

Focus on analysis and information sharing to support a public health approach to violence reduction, including understanding patterns of violence and vulnerability, key local drivers, contexts where harm is occurring and communities/localities of greatest need, as well as sharing data and intelligence to allow a more efficient and effective approach and better-targeted interventions.

Whole-Systems Approach

Partnership working which seek opportunities to meet children, young people's and young adult's needs: working with a shared sense of responsibility those at risk of violence and exploitation they get the right support at the right time.

Supporting Victims

Ensure a focus on victims and strengthen local systems to support victims, reduce repeat victimisation, and recognise that perpetrators of violence can often be victims too.

Substance Misuse

We understand that a significant proportion of local crime is driven by substance misuse and an active drugs market, leading to acquisitive crimes and serious violence. The analysis of Tower Hamlets' drug market will be a key consideration as part of our strategic objectives, and collaborative efforts with partners through our Combatting Drugs Partnership, will focus on addressing substance misuse, providing effective treatment and dismantling drug markets through enforcement measures.

Mental Health

Some victims and perpetrators of serious violence, suffer with mental health problems, with people particularly at risk during and after contact with the criminal justice system. Identifying and addressing mental ill health at the earliest opportunity improves outcomes for those experiencing mental health issues and provide holistic support for people with complex and challenging needs.

Serious Violence Strategic Priorities

Tower Hamlets' Serious Violence Needs Assessment, alongside our public consultation, identified a need to focus on the following strategic priorities:



Each of the Serious Violence Strategic Priorities will have several integrated partnership objectives and activities, contained within our Serious Violence Action Plan aimed at reducing harm. These priorities will be reviewed annually by the Community Safety Partnership Serious Violence Strategy Group.

The delivery of our commitments, set out within this strategy will be managed by various subgroups of the Community Safety Partnership Board, Safeguarding Adult's Board and Local Safeguarding Children's Board

Our Serious Violence Action Plan gives a detailed account of the activities that are, or will, take place to address the various ambitions we seek to deliver for local people

This plan, and the strategic priorities, will be reviewed annually. The CSP have therefore agreed these priorities for the next 12 months

Inequality, Disproportionality and Ethnicity

In Tower Hamlets, like many areas of London, serious violence remains a significant focus, impacting the lives of its residents daily. With the complexity of the landscape of criminality and its constant evolving nature, shaped by a myriad of socio-economic factors, professionals are often found responding to emerging trends to this ever-present problem.

People's experience of crime, disorder, safety and services is not the same. For example, being a woman, being of a Black, Asian and global majority background, being LGBTQIA, being disabled, having a different gender to the one assigned at birth, being older or younger all have an impact.

To ensure Tower Hamlets has a cohesive and integrated community that feels fairly treated and represented across the partnership, we must also acknowledge the national evidence that highlights that the justice system treats children, young people and young adults (up to 25 years-old), from global majority backgrounds, differently. Individuals from Black, Asian and global majority backgrounds are over-represented at most stages of the justice system. The Lammy Review (2017) highlighted that people of Black Asian and global majority defendants were more likely to enter a not guilty plea at court, resulting in harsher sentencing and a longer time spent in the justice system

Tower Hamlets, characterised by its diverse demography, visible wealth and pockets of deprivation, grapples with a unique set of challenges that exacerbate the risk factors associated with violence.

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) can cast a long shadow over many young lives in Tower Hamlets, with experiences of trauma, abuse, and neglect laying the groundwork for future involvement in violence. The correlation between ACEs and involvement in violent behaviour is well-documented, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to break the cycle of violence from an early age.

Furthermore, the socio-economic landscape of Tower Hamlets plays a significant role in shaping opportunities for its residents. Whilst the 2023 Resident Survey found more than 70% of respondents thought Primary and Secondary education services were 'good', there are sectors of the community who feel there is limited access to quality education: compounded by high levels of poverty and unemployment which leaves many young people feeling marginalised and disempowered.

The disproportionate representation of certain demographic groups among both victims and perpetrators of violence, underscores the need for bespoke, partnership focused, community-led interventions that address the root causes of violence.

In addressing the issue of serious violence in Tower Hamlets, we will adopt a holistic approach that recognises the intersecting influences of socio-economic factors, adverse childhood experiences, and community dynamics. By investing in prevention, early intervention, and community empowerment, we aim to create a safer and more equitable future for all residents of Tower Hamlets.

Theme 1: Prevention and Early Intervention

Why is this a priority?

- There is extensive evidence linking deprivation and violence, and Tower Hamlets is the 6th most deprived borough in London: with an overall deprivation score that is higher than both the London and England values.
- There is strong evidence highlighting correlations between speech, language and communication needs and offending. Tower Hamlets has a lower percentage of children achieving school readiness for communication and language skills, compared to London and England averages.
- Regular attendance at school can act as an important protective factor for the most vulnerable pupils. Whilst the percentage of persistent absence in Tower Hamlets has been historically lower than London and England averages, since 2017/18 there has been a sharp increase, which is representative of a national issue.
- There is a complex relationship between poor emotional and mental health and serious violence and exploitation. In Tower Hamlets, the percentage of school pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs has been historically higher than London and England.

Our Aims and strategic intentions:

- Adopting a public health approach to reducing violence
- Tackling the causes of violence
- Using a multi-agency approach for prevention and early intervention
- Reducing access to weapons

Outcomes we want to achieve

- Educational settings are a safe and inclusive place to learn: with spaces that allow children and young people to speak to teachers and violence/exploitation related concerns.
- Wellbeing and resilience is promoted from early years.
- Children and young people at risk are effectively protected from harm through early intervention.
- Children and young people at risk of exclusion or dropping out of education are supported to stay in mainstream schools, where this is the best option for them
- Individuals of different backgrounds within our community, know how to access support for themselves and their peers, and seek help when they need it.
- The critical role of the voluntary community sector and universal services in prevention and early intervention, is recognised and utilised.
- Less children entering the criminal justice system

How We Will Prevent and Intervene Early to Address Serious Violence

Reducing Access to Weapons

The Council and Police will continue to deliver a joint programme of actions to remove weapons from our streets: carrying test purchases across the range of age restricted goods including knives, alcohol, tobacco, vaping products and fireworks.

Multi-agency response

We know that no single agency can tackle violence and exploitation alone. As such, we deliver a multi-agency response to safeguarding those at risk of, or involved in, violence and exploitation. These include but are not limited to:

- The MACE which is the safeguarding forum for children under the age of 18 at risk of exploitation
- The Exploitation and Missing Strategy Group which monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the strategic multi-agency response to child sexual exploitation (CSE); children missing from home, care or education; serious violence; county lines; and gang involvement.
- The Community MARAC which addresses ASB affecting vulnerable people (including vulnerable victims whose homes are taken over to establish a base for illegal drug dealing, typically as part of a county lines operation).

Universal Services

We know that Universal services play a crucial role in supporting children and families. These services are accessible to all children, regardless of their individual needs. These include children's centres and open access youth centres. Through our universal services, we will continue to offer parenting support, early learning programs, safe spaces, recreational activities and support for mental health and well-being.

Voluntary Community Sector (VCS)

We work with our voluntary community to improve the ease of reporting offences for those who would prefer not to report to police, improve engagement with 'hard to reach' sectors of our community and commission programmes of work to deliver support and interventions for those at risk.

INSERT

Resilient and 'Healthy' Children

We know that promoting wellbeing and resilience in children from an early age is crucial to reducing the likelihood of them being involved in or victims of violence and exploitation. To do this we will:

- Identify and address issues/challenges through early intervention and support provision
- Implement trauma-informed approaches in schools, social care provision and other institutions to support children who have experienced trauma
- Create safe and inclusive community spaces where children feel supported and connected

Education

Educational settings can reduce the level of risk to those who are vulnerable, in addition to working alongside parents and families to build understanding of exploitation and violence. We will:

- continue to work with schools across the borough so that all children and young people remain in education and are supported to achieve their aspirations.
- deliver programmes of education and awareness to teach children about personal safety, their rights, healthy relationships, emotional regulation and how to recognise and report abuse.
- monitor exclusions data and persistent absence (including any patterns of high rates of disproportionality for those with protected characteristics).
- Develop a package offer to schools to support them with keeping students at risk of exclusion in mainstream education.

Fewer First Time Entrants (FTEs) into the Youth Criminal Justice System

Research suggest that first time entrants into the criminal justice system, may have varying outcomes in terms of reoffending and that reducing the number of FTEs is a complex issue with no simple solution. We recognise the complexity of this issue and to reduce the number of FTEs, we:

- will use the Child Gravity Matrix - assisting in deciding the most appropriate outcome or disposal for those children and young people, under the age of 18 years who have committed an offence
- will implement 'Outcome 22' – giving young people accused of a crime, the opportunity to engage with diversionary, educational or intervention activity before being prosecuted.
- Improved Triage –
- community involvement – engaging families, communities and victims in the justice process fostering a sense of shared responsibility and accountability
- use data to understand the drivers behind youth crime and identify improved intervention strategies
- continue to focus on the root causes of young people involved in violence whilst maintaining the long-term commitment and investment in prevention and early intervention

London Fire Brigade (LFB)

The London Fire Brigade (LFB) Youth Services aim to be a dynamic, innovative, inclusive, and forward-thinking, to support young people. To ensure this is the case, the LFB deliver a range of programmes which include:

- Fire Cadets - offering access for young for any young person aged between 13-17 years, and any adult volunteer aged 18+ years: with a flexible syllabus reflecting local need
- Fire Setting Intervention Scheme - Providing one-to-one fire safety education to children and young people where concerns have been raised about fire setting or fire play
- Youth Projects - Supporting local boroughs devise and deliver bespoke projects to support an identified need for young people in the area

Theme 2: Safer Spaces

Why is this a priority

- We know that violence and active drugs markets are more concentrated in particular sectors of the borough. Addressing risk locations remains a priority for Tower Hamlets, to have the maximum possible impact on addressing violence and the associated harms.
- We understand that communities drive change and that working with local organisations can have the most significant impact when engaging both victims and/or suspects of violent crime.
- Hospital admissions data also shows that more than 80% of male victims of serious violence resided in the most deprived areas within the borough
- We know that drugs are a driver of violence, exploitation and other crimes. Tower Hamlets recoded 465 Drug Trafficking offences for period 2022-23: an increase of 32.1% (113 offences) when compared to the previous year.

Our Strategic Intentions

- Working with communities and neighbourhoods to improve resilience and reduce violence
- Identifying and addressing high harm and high risk locations
- Continuing to develop serious and organised crime and drug market profiles locally which consider threat, risk and harm
- Tackling the supply and demand for drugs

Outcomes we want to achieve

- Demand for and supply of drugs is reduced
- Housing providers and their public facing staff, likely to have interactions with those involved in or affected by violence know that they can, and how to, feed concerns into other violence-reduction partners.
- We operate an effective Combatting Drugs Partnership that addresses shared challenges related to substance misuse
- We use strategic analysis of data, intelligence, local drugs markets and county lines to inform tactical delivery and use of targeted resource in risk locations
- We have an improved understanding of organised crime groups that affect the local violence and exploitation profile

How We Will Create Safer Spaces

Tackling Harm outside the Home:

We have developed a 'harm outside the home' framework which has been launched across the Supporting Families division of the Council and includes our multi-agency approach to making spaces and places safer for children in the borough. This approach is three pronged: setting out a referral process, child protection process and a care planning process.

Using Data and Intelligence

Understanding patterns of violence and vulnerability, key local drivers, contexts where harm is occurring and the communities of greatest need, is key to addressing violence. To keep abreast with the evolving landscape of violence and can support a public health approach to violence, we:

- have developed a Violence Needs Assessment in partnership, to ensure we have a strong understanding of the violence picture locally.
- continue to develop violence and exploitation profiles that identify risk locations, the demographics of victims and perpetrators of violence and temporal analysis that highlights when violence occurs across the borough.
- have an Exploitation Team that provides quarterly data reports which capture all serious youth violence that is flagged through daily and weekly intelligence briefings and the Daily Risk Meetings (DRM).
- have monthly, police produced, analytical products for tactical assessments that focus on hotspots for violent crime and knife crime.
- have a police-led Tasking and Coordination Centre (TCC): developing further how violence (and other crime) is assessed and what resources are then tasked against, as well as monitoring the taskings and reviewing results.
- operate an agile tasking process through the Council Safer Neighbourhood Operations team: addressing low level ASB and crime issues and more serious and complex problems. The tasking model facilitates early intervention on hyper local crime generators, reducing the risk of escalation.

CCTV

Tower Hamlets' CCTV network and infrastructure uses 380 street based cameras and automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) technology. Recently investing £3.9 million to upgrade the existing system which has further improved the image quality and zoom function, this latest technology will be used to help gather evidence, support the community including vulnerable residents and deter law breakers. Using digital video surveillance, redeployable cameras and body worn cameras supported by Police facial recognition technology, we use video surveillance to positively affect place based crimes.

My Ends Project

In Tower Hamlets, we seek to prevent violence locally by providing leaders from our communities with resources to enhance violence prevention measures. After delivering programmes of work through the 'My Ends' programme, with the first round of available funding, the Community Safety Partnership is supporting another ambitious Consortium. Through the proposed programme, the Council and partners will continue:

- to ensure that learning from the Consortium's approach to working with young people and grass roots communities is a key element within this strategy, and our public health approach to violence reduction;
- to facilitate multi-agency working at a strategic level; and
- facilitate links with the universal offer to young people and families in Tower Hamlets, including our new groundbreaking and expanded youth service offer.

Housing

Housing services and registered providers of social housing (RPSHs) play a vital role in supporting the efforts to address serious violence: linking with community safety partners and encouraging the understanding that their public facing staff are likely to encounter those involved in or affected by violence. In Tower Hamlets:

- Housing Services provide key links to community safety and ensure overlapping themes and responsibilities are communicated across the piece, via the Community Safety Partnership (CSP)
- Poplar HARCA (registered housing provider) run an award-winning youth service called Spotlight. Spotlight, in consortium with Osmani Trust and Streets of Growth, have been delivering the "My Ends" project, using funding from the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime's (MOPAC) Violence Reduction Unit (VRU). This initiative aims to tackle youth violence and supports a mix of center-based and community outreach work, including mentoring, courses, and tailored support for disadvantaged and disengaged young people.

Robbery

We recognise the links between robbery offences and serious violence and the importance for enforcement, intervention and preventative measures to be adopted to address this issue. To address the robbery and its links to serious violence and exploitation, we:

- **implement community policing programmes such as 'safety corridors' -**
- ensure the use of police generated 'Merlin' reports regarding all children at point of arrest – meaning information is shared with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Team (MAST), reviewed by children's services and multi-agency partners to inform a threshold decision regarding the level of need/risk and type of response required
- have bid for funding to deliver a 'School Robbery Prevention Project' which will deploy key resources to reduce the likelihood of robberies in and around schools during 3-6pm; work with victims of robbery and their families to reduce further victimisation and mitigate causative factors; Engage schools and other educational or community spaces in addressing the causes behind robberies and actions they can take

Combatting Drugs Partnership

Our Combating Drugs Partnership (CDP) is a multi-agency forum, formed to implement the national 'From Harm to Hope' strategy: managing partnership work within Tower Hamlets to reduce drug-related harm. Our CDP will focus on delivering three strategic priorities:

- Breaking drug supply chains
- Delivering a world-class treatment and recovery system
- Achieving a shift in the demand for drugs

Through enacting these three key priorities, the partnership will aim to achieve six outcomes:

- Reduction in drug use
- Reduction in drug related crime
- Reduction in drug related deaths and harm
- Reduction in drug supply
- Increase engagement in drug treatment
- Improved drug recovery outcomes.

The partnership have developed a strategy that provides a detailed insight into the local approach to tackling drugs and substance misuse which can be found [here](#).

Theme 3: Disrupting, Pursuing and Managing Offenders who Pose a Risk to Children and Young Adults

Why is this a priority

- The rate of reoffending (all ages) has been consistently higher than both London and England rates: at 31%. The reoffending rate is 6% higher than the national rate and 5% higher than the London rate.
- Social media directly affects risk of exploitation: with 97% of Catch22's child sexual exploitation referrals in 2020/21 citing online or social media elements. These referrals showed substantial increases related to online grooming and abuse.
- An active drug market exists in Tower Hamlets, including a significant opiate-using population, with 24 individual drug lines identified in the Central East BCU. However, county lines are more of an issue in Hackney, as drug supply links to gang activity is more prominent in Hackney than Tower Hamlets.
- Tower Hamlets Adult Social Care data between November 2019 and October 2023 shows there were 18 ASC concerns about sexual exploitation and 13 about modern slavery/human trafficking for people aged 18-25

Our aims and strategic intentions

- Relentlessly pursuing and managing high harm offenders
- Implementing positive diversion from violence
- Addressing the drugs market
- Tackle the operations of OCGs

Outcomes we want to achieve:

- Criminal activity is disrupted, and partners use the full range of available powers, including civil orders, to prevent perpetrators from exploiting vulnerable people.
- Partners work together to ensure perpetrators are prosecuted: focusing on individuals who exploit young people for profit or gain.
- Facilitate community involvement in Stop & Search - including the monitoring of S60 by community representatives.

How We Will Disrupt Pursue and Managing Offenders who Pose a Risk to Children and Young Adults

Risk Management

Risk management is a crucial component of tackling violence and exploitation: implementing comprehensive strategies for key agencies to enhance public safety and identify individuals who present a danger so as to implement restrictions and rehabilitation programmes. Locally, we will manage risk through:

- Integrated Offender Management (IOM) – a multi-agency approach to offender management: monitoring a targeted group of offenders who are deemed likely to re-offend
- Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) - public protection arrangements implemented to ensure the successful management of violent and sexual offenders
- Probation Services - statutory risk management service delivering interventions (license conditions or court orders)
- Met Police Violence Harm Assessment (VHA) Index - a tool used to identify and risk assess individuals involved in violence in London.

Violence Assessment Meetings

To manage risk and be proactive in our approach to reducing violence, we conduct various Police-led violence assessment meetings. These include:

- the local weekly BAU Central East violence assessment meeting which is a weekly meeting to review key violence intelligence, offences of note and hotspot areas within the BCU. It allows for tasking and co-ordination to ensure hotspot areas for violence (including Robbery offences) are appropriately identified and targeted with appropriate resources
- the 'Pacesetters' meeting, which is a 'moment in time' assessment of key threat, harm and risk on that day.
- the Violent Harm Assessment is an intelligence tool designed to identify those individuals who cause the most harm. It sets risk assessment scores for violent offending by known individuals. If they no longer meet the scoring criteria they are removed.

Probation Services

The Probation Service is a statutory criminal justice service that supervises high-risk offenders released into the community. It offers those involved/at risk of involvement with violence, with interventions which help them move away from criminality through:

- Community sentence interventions (i.e. accredited programmes like the Better Relationships Domestic Abuse programme).
- Structured Interventions for those who would benefit from intervention but aren't eligible for accredited programmes (i.e. Managing My Emotions: aims to strengthen emotional management, particularly anger).
- Bespoke license conditions, in relation to engaging with interventions addressing criminogenic need

Diversionsary Programmes

We know that simply arresting those involved with violence will not eradicate the issue. That's why we deliver programmes that seek to support and divert offenders away from crime, such as:

- Engage Project – 2 Youth Workers in custody suites to offer support in 'teachable and reachable' moments when a child/young person is arrested.
- Spotlight - Youth service providing safe spaces for 11–19-year-olds and SEND young people up to 25.
- Turnaround Programme - Offers children and their families support to build on their individual strengths, with the aim of preventing them going on to offend or reoffend and involvement in decisions about the support and interventions they receive.

Stop and Search

We are developing a more targeted approach to the use of stop and search as a tactic to combat violent crime. We have existing scrutiny mechanisms in place to monitor and review the use of stop and search including a MOPAC scrutiny panel. Police have also launched a stop and search QR code. This takes searched individuals to the Tower Hamlets website where all information in relation to legislation, police powers and individuals rights are made available.

Tackling Organised Crime Groups

We recognise the links between serious organised crime (SOC), violence and exploitation and the associated harms for communities. SOC groups are involved in a multitude of criminal activities from drug trafficking, modern slavery and human trafficking (including county lines). To tackle the operation of organised crime groups (OCGs), we work in partnership to target and disrupt criminal activity in high harm locations, stabilising the area and focusing on the reduction of placed-based harm where serious and organised crime is most concentrated.

Enforcement

We understand that a multi-faceted approach to the issue of violence and exploitation is required: addressing the drivers of criminality, preventing and intervening early but also enforcing against those who persist with a cycle of offending behaviour. To disrupt and enforce against those who pose significant risk to children and young adults, we:

- have a specialist Police, Violence Reduction Unit, funded by the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) as part of the Serious Violence Fund.
- implement new legislation such as the Police, Crime Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. This gives new powers to issue Serious Violence Reduction Orders (SVROs) which are civil orders that apply to offenders convicted of an offence involving a bladed article or offensive weapon.
- conduct targeted patrols using Council funded Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers (THEOs), providing strong uniformed presence in local communities which can deter offending behaviour whilst building relationships with local people.

Theme 4: Supporting Victims of Serious Violence

Why is this a priority

- Exposure to domestic abuse during childhood leads to greater rates of being either a victim or perpetrator of domestic abuse in adulthood. In Tower Hamlets, between 2018-2022, 1230 children were identified to have been a victim of domestic abuse.
- 2021-2022 police data for violence affecting children and young adults under 25, shows violence with injury made up 35% of violence against the person offences: with the most common category being 'Actual Bodily Harm'.
- Knife Crime with injury offences saw an increase of 16.90% when comparing 2022-23 figures to the previous year.
- Police crime data shows that Tower Hamlets has the fourth highest rate of domestic abuse offences out of all London boroughs, between August 2022-2023.
- Transitioning from children to adult care provision, transfers in care can be disjointed, inadequate/inconsistent and lack planning: at a time of increased vulnerability.

Our aims and strategic intentions

- Continuing to adopt a trauma-informed approach when supporting victims of violence
- Improving support to victims of violence
- Improving the support for those transitioning from children to adult social care provision

Outcomes we want to achieve

- Fewer victims of violence
- Victims of violence are confident in reporting
- Support to achieve physical and emotional recovery
- Appropriate systems of support to aid recovery and reduce vulnerability

How We Will Support Victims of Violence

Hate Crime

Tower Hamlets has a diverse and vibrant community, with the largest Bangladeshi and Muslim population in England and Wales. To ensure we support all of our residents, we:

- the Council has a dedicated hate crime team that works closely with police and other agencies to prevent all forms of hate crime, act against offenders and support victims
- monitor community tensions and promote social integration

Multi-Agency Working

We work with local partners to ensure robust and relevant for people at risk of harm. We have:

- a multi-agency referral process through our Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) which brings together agencies (and their information) to identify risks to children at the earliest possible point and respond with the most effective interventions.
- a MACE which is the safeguarding forum for children under the age of 18 at risk of exploitation
- High Risk Panel - Assisting practitioners in safeguarding cases where risks are high, challenging and complex
- Domestic Abuse Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) – a meeting where information is shared on the highest risk domestic abuse cases, between key partner agencies.
- Hate Incident Panel (HIP) - Monthly case panel that discusses hate crime cases

Mental Health

Victims of violence commonly report ‘mental or emotional’ needs following a serious violent incident. To ensure we provide the appropriate support, we:

- have a Tower Hamlets Emotional Wellbeing Service (THEWS) which offers interventions for children with concerns around emotional regulation
- **Adult MH Service -**
- North East London NHS commission mental health support teams across schools in Tower Hamlets, offering interventions that they operate in

Transitions from Children’s to Adult Social Care Provision

We know that young people transitioning from children to adult social care provision can be a challenging process: losing familiar support networks, a change of policies and procedures to adhere to, increased vulnerability and challenges with understanding how to manage finances when living independently. To mitigate and reduce the risk to those transitioning to adult social care provision, we:

- have a transitions protocol that is designed to support the transition process from Children’s services to Adult Social Care and is aimed at staff working in Children’s and Adults services
- have a dedicated Transition Support team that provides impartial advice, information and assistance to support children and their families during key points of transition
- operate effective planning and assessment processes to ensure support for children and young people who may require support beyond the age of 17 is planned – identifying needs through assessments
- have a transitions social worker post dedicated to mitigating the risk to young adults that qualify for care and those who do not meet the threshold of care provision

Assessments and Referrals

We understand that it is imperative we ensure effective co-ordinated referrals and that support is available to victims and those who are vulnerable. We will ensure:

- those under 18 who are victims of violence and or exploitation and open to children's social care have packages of support that are monitored through the child protection statutory processes.
- those aged under 25 who are victims of violence, and all victims of Domestic Abuse, to have a trauma informed needs assessment, with referrals to therapeutic support.
- we have oversight of children at risk of extra-familial harm through the Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) panel.

Theme 5: Safeguarding those at Risk of Criminal and Sexual Exploitation

Why is this a priority

- The exploitation of vulnerable people is a national issue, encompassing county lines, cuckooing, modern day slavery and child sexual exploitation (CSE). In Tower Hamlets, the most commonly reported category of CSE is 'online exploitation': accounting for 34% of the reports.
- 50% of under 18 victims of criminal exploitation, had a missing episode reported: many of which were during school hours with truancy being a significant risk factor.
- We know that social media use among children can act as a catalyst for violence perpetration in real life, due to social pressures and feeling of disrespect.
- The majority of the victims of child criminal exploitation (CCE) had several risk factors highlighted with 75% of victims considered to have additional vulnerabilities including poor mental health, learning difficulties and past experiences of abuse.
- People's experience of crime, disorder, safety and services is not the same and national evidence highlights that the justice system treats individuals from global majority backgrounds differently.

Our aims and strategic intentions

- Addressing the victim/offender overlap
- Safeguarding and educating young people
- Adopting a reinvigorated focus on hidden, high harm crimes such as modern slavery
- Taking a safeguarding approach to both victims and perpetrators of violent crime, considering adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) of those affected, and adopting a public health approach to addressing violence
- Addressing the disproportionate number of people of a global majority background in the criminal justice system

Outcomes we want to achieve:

- Services recognise the complexities of the lives of those at risk and respond to the signs of serious violence, sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation
- We take a whole-system approach to tackling violence: working together and with residents and communities, with a shared sense of responsibility towards those at risk
- Those at risk of exploitation or serious violence (and their families) are identified, get the support they need at the right time, and are protected from serious harm as a result
- Professionals understand the scope of serious violence, child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation in Tower Hamlets to effectively protect and support our children and young people
- Recidivism is reduced through addressing the causes of overrepresentation of people of a black and global majority background in the criminal justice system

How We Will Safeguard Those at Risk of Criminal and Sexual Exploitation

Tackling Criminal Exploitation:

We know that an active and thriving drugs market can drive child criminal exploitation (CCE): where children are drawn into gang-related activities, drug dealing, violent crime or weapon carrying. We will:

- Equip staff across all agencies with consistent screening and assessment tools, skills and learning to help them recognise and respond to the signs of CCE
- Provide children at the highest risk with accessible, responsive support from the Council exploitation team
- Share information and intelligence about individual cases routinely, accurately and in accordance with local protocols
- Establish the needs of young adults at the highest risk of violence and exploitation: agreeing realistic actions to address these needs
- Continue to safeguard children by implementing the investigation strategy and targeting exploiters who seek to harm vulnerable children for profit and/or gratification, through the Police Child Exploitation Team (CET)

Use of Funding

The Community Safety Partnership have a shared responsibility in protecting our young people and will use various funding streams across the partnership to address the risk of children being exploited. This includes:

- MOPAC Violence Reduction Unit funding (£1.3m of funding from MOPAC through the London Crime Prevention Fund)
- Department for Education (DFE) funding – supporting organisations like LEAP to fund violence and exploitation reduction initiatives that provide support to children and young people
- NHS funding delivering initiatives across NEL that support children allocated in the youth justice service with mild-to-moderate needs.
- Core funding – using allocated public funding to deliver programmes of work within existing budgets (i.e. Council Youth Service, Exploitation HUB and Police integrated gangs unit)

Addressing Modern Slavery

Modern slavery is a complex crime and may involve multiple forms of exploitation. The Community Safety Partnership will improve on the use of the National Referral Mechanism to identify and refer potential victims of modern slavery and trafficking, ensuring they receive the appropriate support.

Disproportionality

We know that there is a disproportionate number of people of a global majority background represented in the criminal justice system. To address this locally, we:

- have a Race Action Plan with four key areas for delivery, where disproportionality is a common theme running throughout each of them, demonstrating a commitment to understanding the root causes and addressing them
- diverse representation across our services that represent our local communities
- implement community policing strategies that involve our local community to build trust and confidence.
- will improve our use of available data – identifying the ethnicity of those coming into contact with the CJS and realising disparities and areas that need attention.

Online Safety

We know that online exploitation is a concern for those who are particularly vulnerable to harmful content and predatory behaviour on the internet. To address this challenge, we will adopt a multi-faceted approach:

- delivering a wide range of partner training and awareness sessions through the Council and Police: commissioning 'Loudmouth' to deliver sessions in school and Police delivering training and awareness sessions alongside school's officers
- supporting parents through parenting programmes like 'Triple P' and 'Speak easy', providing information and discussion on grooming and exploitation
- awareness raising of reporting mechanisms to report online abuse through services like 'Childline' and the 'Online Safety Centre'
- providing support services for children who have experienced online harm
- Operating the Police Online Child Sexual Abuse & Exploitation unit (OCSAE) unit which assesses intelligence and manages risk of harm

Theme 6: Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls

Why is this a priority?

- We know that social norms such as male entitlement, rigid gender roles and misogyny are risk factors for committing sexual and domestic abuse offences.
- In Tower Hamlets, data from 2021 - 2023 shows that there are higher rates for all the 6 most common DA offences than the Northeast London average.
- Using national prevalence estimates for domestic abuse in Tower Hamlets, it is estimated that only 43% of the expected number of domestic abuse offences were reported to the police between 2021-2022.
- Tower Hamlets is the 5th highest borough in London for rates of sexual offences, based on police-recorded data. The rate of sexual offences since the year 2021/22 has increased: similarly seen across London and England.
- Tackling violence against women and girls remains a national priority. Charging and prosecution rates for domestic abuse and rape at an unacceptable level resulting in a loss of confidence in the criminal justice system (CJS).

Our aims and strategic intentions

- Bringing perpetrators to justice
- Providing support for all victims of VAWG
- Prioritising women's safety in public spaces
- Carrying out community prevention and awareness to tackle misogyny
- Develop a new Tower Hamlets Violence against Women and Girls Strategy

Outcomes we want to achieve:

- Support to all victims and survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence
- Continue the work and build upon the successes of tackling violence against women and girls through a new VAWG Strategy for 2024
- Bringing perpetrators to justice and holding them to account
- Implement the new Tower Hamlets Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy

How We Will tackle Violence Against Women and Girls

Women's Safety in Public Spaces Action Plan

The responsibility for preventing or reducing VAWG is everyone's business, not just women and girls who often rely on service interventions to reduce or resist sexual violence and harassment in public. Our 'Women's Safety Action Plan' seeks to make public spaces safer for women setting out 7 recommendations that detail actions that work towards achieving them. This includes but is not limited to:

- Partners collaborating to improve women's awareness of the local offer of help available that directly support women's safety on the streets
- improving self-defence access for women and girls when considering leisure, public health and physical wellbeing activities.
- Housing providers strengthen their partnership workings to focus on tackling women's safety issues on estates
- A commitment to build a new Tower Hamlets women's centre, and to further invest in women's safety in the nighttime economy through the late night levy fund

Challenging Public Attitudes

We know that outdated and stereotypical attitudes towards women can develop into harmful behaviours if unchallenged. To address challenging attitudes towards women and girls, we will:

- Provide education and raise awareness about the prevalence and impact of VAWG
- Engage men and boys as allies and role models to challenge harmful stereotypes and promote healthy, respectful relationships
- Advocate and campaign for policy and legislative change that protects and supports women, including local advocacy through our 16 days of Action and White Ribbon Campaign.

Training and Awareness

We collaborate with partners to co-ordinate a local training offer for identifying, preventing and tackling VAWG for key professionals coming into contact with survivors and/or perpetrators: seeking to embed a robust understanding of DA within the workforce. We have:

- a MOPAC funded VAWG Training and Awareness Officer who leads on developing and updating an extensive VAWG training brochure which is offered to all and circulated widely
- MARAC training - ensuring key services understand when and how to report signs of domestic and sexual violence
- bespoke training, outreach and awareness plan
- free VAWG training courses which includes training on coercive control, adult family violence, economic abuse, intimate partner violence, domestic abuse awareness, and good practice for housing professionals

Tackling VAWG through Better Education

We will continue to adopt a Whole School Approach to preventing abuse and tackling gender-based violence: promoting healthy, equal and respectful relationships between young people. We will do this through:

- Our Council's Healthy Lives Team for sex and relationships: developing a curriculum for what healthy relationships look like and raising awareness of the early indicators of abuse.
- The Violence Reduction Unit funded programme delivered in schools to promote healthy relationships, helping address gender based violence

Supporting victims/survivors

We place a significant focus on tackling domestic and sexual abuse in Tower Hamlets: acknowledging VAWG is under reported and that a global estimate of over a quarter of women aged 15–49 years, who have been in a relationship, have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner at least once in their lifetime. To support victims/survivors of we:

- Operate a specialist domestic violence and abuse (DVA) training, support, and referral initiative called the IRIS program for General Practices (GPs). Funded by the North East London NHS Integrated Care Partnership, this programme aims to improve the primary care response to domestic violence and abuse
- Support vulnerable women involved in sex work through the Door of Hope project which is run by Streets of Growth: a charity which seeks to end sexual exploitation
- Commission Solace Women's Aid to provide support to high-risk victims of domestic and sexual violence: including advocacy, referral and information. Victims/survivors are offered one-to-one support, specialist services for victims of serious and violent crime (including rape and sexual assault) and referrals to other specialist agencies.

Engagement with the voluntary and community sectors, young people and local business

This section provides an insight into how the residents of Tower Hamlets not only feel about violent crime in the borough, but also provides information about how the residents feel about the services that are tasked with reducing and preventing violent crime in the borough and supporting those who have become victims of this type of offence. We conducted an online survey and a number of face-to-face engagement sessions with children and young people which captured the information below.

Hackathon survey for Young Tower Hamlets. Out of roughly 1000 young people surveyed....

- 183 said that they didn't attend youth clubs as they felt it was unsafe
- 25% said that they were worried about street gangs
- 23% said that they were worried about youth violence
- 13% said that they were worried about county lines
- 603 said that they went to family members when they were worried, only 40 said that they would go to a police officer

Consultation Process

- Public Consultation – what public would like us to do

What professionals want to do:

We held a series of