

Women's Safety Action Plan

Recommendation 1

The council and its strategic partners including the Metropolitan Police, Faith Communities and the VCS 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 and 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 which has seen incident reports go up for what was previously considered "low level" offences and were clearly 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 and based on feedback from women a series of 'digital safety walks' across the borough were created. These were highly successful and had much better attendance and involvement from women and girls. All 20 wards 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.

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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 collaborated 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).

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**.

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It is 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.

Action	Owner(s)	Completion date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an anti-sexual harassment campaign with Hackney Council and City of London. 	Rosie Whitelegg, VAWG Coordinator, LBTH	November 2023 Completed
<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 Completed

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<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 	<p>Joshuah Codjoe, Neighbourhood Safety Manager, LBTH</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women's Safety in Public Spaces Consultation recommendations published 	<p>Jennie Savage, Public Realm Project Officer, LBTH</p>	<p>October 2023 Completed</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Police try to improve their relationship and build trust with women and girls 	<p>DI Yasmin Lalani - MPS</p>	<p>Ongoing Met Police New VAWG Strategy</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Police target perpetrators within the night-time economy 	<p>DI Yasmin Lalani - MPS</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<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. 	<p>Menara Ahmed, Senior VAWG and Hate Crime Manager and Zoe Barwick, BID Director, Aldgate Business Connect</p>	<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 group coordinated by the Aldgate BID.</p>
<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 	<p>Lucy Collins – Business Liaison Manager, Growth & Economic Development, LBTH</p>	<p>November 2023 Completed</p>

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<p>engage with smaller businesses across the borough and promote awareness of the VAWG agenda</p>		
<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 	<p>Lucy Collins, Business Liaison Manager, Growth & Economic Development, LBTH</p>	<p>March 2024</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Night Time Economy Activity - Through WAVE training, work to expand Ask 4 Angela campaign locally with Safer Sounds • Promote Street Safe in local community • Internal persons within the pub and clubs. Number of Welfare and Vulnerability Engagement (WAVE) training delivered to all NTE venues and number of Ask4Angela training delivered to all NTE venues • Monthly walk and talk • Relentlessly pursue and actively manage prolific perpetrators using multi agency whole system approach • Linked series of sexual assaults are given to 1 detective to take ownership of that series • Seek to support Probation's use of GPS tagging for high risk offenders • MetGirlz – offering support and mentorship for young girls on periphery of crime in collaboration with educational facility. • Collaborative work with Youth Offending teams, to focus on women and girls through criminal justice system. • Women/Children community focused groups focusing on informal conversations around lived experiences of crime and support needed. 	<p>Yasmin Lalani, MPS CI Dave Hodges MPS, Fiona Shaik Umar MPS</p>	<p>Ongoing 2024</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership work with local Somali women and girls sports session to promote safety in sport/outdoor activities Presentations in collaboration with youth engagement team to youth centres around VAWG/hate crime 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Mayor has launched a Women's Commission which will focus on bringing women's lived experience with a focus on safety and this will bring forward recommendations for consideration by the Council and partners. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Afazul Hoque, Head of Corporate Strategy and Communities</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">December 2024</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Council of Mosques to tackle hate crime and violence against women and girls, provide activities for women and girls in mosques, and encourage more representation of women in mosque management. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Afazul Hoque, Head of Corporate Strategy and Communities, Jaber Khan, Senior Strategy and Policy Officer</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">March 2025</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue development and implementation of VAWG programme of work to raise awareness and promote VAWG offer/women safety with Tower Hamlets Inter-faith Forum (THIFF) and Council of Mosques. This includes reaching out to all THIFF and Council of Mosques representatives with VAWG offer. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Menara Ahmed, Senior VAWG and HC Manager, Arif Ahmed, Mosque Engagement Coordinator, Council of Mosques, Sufia Alam, Head of Programmes Maryam Centre</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">December 2024</p>
<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. This is to tie into a service-wide review of what is on offer to women of all communities.</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>		

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<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> <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. This includes ensuring Sylheti and Somali speaking specialist caseworkers and co-locations at key hubs. 	Menara Ahmed, Senior VAWG and Hate Crime Manager, LBTH	March 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To commission and maintain the Mayors Community Grants Programme which has a Community Safety theme of 8 projects with a total funding of £223,399 per year from 1 November 2023 to 31 March 2027. Project activities include self-defence classes for girls and women, support to BAME women affected by domestic abuse and early intervention activities to keep vulnerable young people safe. 	Afazul Hoque, Head of Corporate Strategy and Communities, Robert Mee, VCS Grants Lead	March 2027
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mayor's Priority Project: Establishment of a Women's Resource Centre with a focus on targeting community groups in particular Bangladeshi women. 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	December 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Aldgate Connect Business Improvement District and the collaborative 'Safer Paths' campaign around safety, 	Zoe Barwick, BID Director, Aldgate Business Connect,	December 2023 and ongoing

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<p>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>	<p>Menara Ahmed, Senior VAWG and Hate Crime Manager</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 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:</p> <p>In keeping with our Women's Safety theme, we are partnering with our Sports & 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> <p>The SPA team has successfully run various events and physical activities during international women day and week engaging over 1200 women and girls in the borough.</p> <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. The leisure insourcing team also held a women and girls engagement session around sport and physical activity participation with over 80 participants at the Town Hall which identified some safety concerns (e.g. inappropriate lighting around the centres). The new leisure service will work with the appropriate teams (e.g. planning, VAWG) to address those concerns and will conduct more consultation with women and girls to review progress.</p>		

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<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 	Tim Clee, Programme Manager, Sports/Physical Activity, LBTH	April 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two self-defence classes to be delivered each week for 18 months 	Pauline Stewart, Physical Activity Officer, Culture, LBTH	December 2024
<p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>The council's Children and Education Service in particular Young Tower Hamlets to design 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> <p>The Healthy Lives Team have ensured that LBTH schools have more Bronze, Silver and Gold Healthy Schools Awards than any other London borough. 96% of LBTH schools have a bronze award, which includes teaching non-statutory topics relating to Relationships Education, Sex Education and Health Education. Schools have a Relationships and Sex Education policy, which details what and how their school is teaching the various topics. The team offer training, support and materials to all schools (teachers and pupils) on these areas which includes healthy and respectful relationships, online abuse such as revenge porn, domestic abuse, sexual abuse, family relationships and being safe. This is in furtherance to 2019 Department for Education statutory guidance. Primary and secondary schools are included.</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>Amy-Kate Garwood, VAWG Training and Awareness Officer, LBTH</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Healthy Lives team will support schools with their PSHE provision and delivery, and this will be measured by 80% of schools having a Bronze Healthy Schools award from the Mayor of London 	<p>Kate Smith, Head of Healthy Lives, LBTH</p>	<p>July 2025</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young Tower Hamlets (YTH) will work with the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) training and awareness officer to train staff as VAWG & HC champions in the service. • Youth Service staff will meet monthly/quarterly to plan and deliver VAWG & HC sessions in youth safe spaces. • The VAWG/HC Champions course will include introducing those attending to all VAWG and HC strands to help attendees understand the range of options available in the borough and to identify appropriate referral pathways. • Train all Youth Council representatives to become VAWG/HC champions and YTH will also plan and deliver peer on peer education workshops in Youth Safe Spaces. • YTH will identify a staff member to become the lead VAWG/HC champion/specialist for the service who can offer support and guidance at a more local level and coordinate the meetings for the VAWG/HC champions and work with Youth Council reps to deliver the peer education programme in youth safe spaces as a pilot. 	<p>Hasan Faruq – Young Tower Hamlets Participation and Operations Manager, LBTH</p>	<p>December 2025</p>

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<p>LBTH Education Safeguarding Service will continue to promote the VAWG strands through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Its safeguarding training packages delivered to school stakeholders including All Staff groups, Governing Bodies, and Designated Safeguarding Leads, and the termly Designated Safeguarding Leads Forums. • VAWG Training and Awareness Officer invited to present at the termly school DSL Forum to ensure DSLs are kept up to date with the VAWG agenda and offer. Encouraging schools to take the offer of VAWG training and the VAWG Pledge. • Operation Encompass – 92% of the total eligible schools have signed up to Operation Encompass. THESS is actively working with the remaining schools to sign up. Please note Independent Schools are not included in the scheme. • The provision of an annually updated model Child Protection Policy which is sent out to all schools. This is to ensure school's Child Protection Policy includes VAWG strands, are compliant and in line with the latest guidance. • The bi-annual Section 175/11 Safeguarding Audit Cycle for schools, which includes relevant themed areas such as Child-on-Child abuse, Human rights and Equality, PSHE/RSE, LGBTQ+, and Online Safety. The audits are evaluated by the Quality Assurance and Training Officer and any gaps identified in the school's arrangements are followed up. 	<p>Sharifa Choudhury, Education Team Manager, Lisa Fraser, Head of Education, LBTH</p>	<p>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 which will build on ongoing RSL work begun with the Ask the Ombudsman event.</p>		
<p>Comments from Service:</p>		

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<p>It is recommended that all Registered Social Landlords (now Registered Providers of Social Housing/RPSH) 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 have been presented to Housing teams and registered providers of social housing via TH Housing Management Forum, TH Common Housing Register Forum and TH Housing Forum. This aimed to encourage improvement of their response to victims of domestic abuse by going through Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation. This was also followed up via a letter.</p>		
Action	Owner(s)	Completion date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of good practice recommendations to TH Housing Management Forum, TH Common Housing Register Forum and TH Housing Forum. Delivery via meeting presentations and letters circulation. • Support RPSH's with good practice recommendations where requested. 	<p>Rafiqul Hoque, Head of Housing Options, LBTH, Menara Ahmed, Senior VAWG and Hate Crime Manager, LBTH</p>	<p>Completed October 2023</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LBTH Housing working towards achieving Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance Accreditation with support from VAWG Team. 	<p>Conor Lewis, Assistant Transformation Manager, Housing</p>	<p>End of Q3 2024/25</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the Ombudsman information session held for Tower Hamlets Homes and Housing Association tenants and leaseholders. The Housing Ombudsman for England provided information on the role of the Housing Ombudsman Service and the process residents should follow to get complaints about their social housing landlord dealt with effectively. 	<p>Karen Swift, Divisional Director, Housing, LBTH</p>	<p>Completed October 2023</p>
<p>Recommendation 6</p>		

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The Police/THEOs to actively target and focus their recruitment and retention strategy to reflect recruiting representative women from the community in Tower Hamlets. This to be done in cooperation with faith communities and the Council.

Comments from Service:

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 conducting 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. Phase 4 of the THEO recruitment is currently live on the job advert, with Phase 3 closed shortlisting and assessment are to follow in June.

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	October 2024 Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment with faith communities this will formulate part of the recruitment campaign. Interconnection and working with faith groups within Tower Hamlets. 	Keith Stanger – Head of Safer Neighbourhood Operations	October 2024

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.

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Action	Owner(s)	Completion date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VAWG Champions, male allyship training offered to Tower Hamlets Councillors. 	Rose Whitelegg, 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