



CABINET

9th April 2025

Subject Heading:

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy

Cabinet Member:

Cllr Barry Mugglestone

ELT Lead:

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Policy context:

The Havering Community Safety partnership plan 2022-2025 was approved by Full Council on 6 October 2022

Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls was identified as a key priority within the plan

Financial summary:

There are no financial implications associated with recommending the Strategy for approval. It is envisaged the strategy will be implemented within existing budgets/grant funding available. Any issues arising will be raised through the appropriate channels as needs arise.

Is this a Key Decision?

Significant effect on two or more Wards

When should this matter be reviewed? September 2026

Reviewing OSC: *People Overview and Scrutiny Sub Committee*

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

People - Things that matter for residents X

Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy X

Resources - A well run Council that delivers for People and Place.

SUMMARY

1. The Havering Violence against Women & Girls Strategy 2025 – 2029 (*Appendix 1*) aims to address and reduce violence against women and girls (VAWG) in Havering. This strategy is aligned with the Mayor's "Building a Safer London: Police and Crime Plan 2022-25" and the "Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy 2022-25". The strategy focuses on four key priorities: reducing and preventing violence, increasing trust and confidence, better supporting victims, and protecting people from exploitation and harm.
2. VAWG accounts for the greatest socio-economic cost to community safety partnership services in Havering. Domestic violence constitutes a third of all physical violence reported to agencies.
3. Havering delivers various initiatives and services to address VAWG using four strands – Prevention, Provision, Protection, and Partnership. These include events, campaigns, support services, and enforcement actions.
4. The vision is to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls through the development of policies, preventative work, high-quality service provision, and robust enforcement actions against perpetrators.
5. The strategy aims to prevent and reduce VAWG, support all victims and survivors, hold perpetrators accountable, and build trust and confidence.
6. The strategy will be implemented and monitored by the VAWG Strategic Group, which reports directly to the Havering Community Safety Partnership. The action plan will be refreshed annually to adapt to emerging trends and developments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Cabinet approve the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2025 - 2029.

REPORT DETAIL

1. In "[Building a Safer London: Police and Crime Plan 2022-25](#)," the Mayor set out his priorities for policing and crime reduction for his term in office. The four key priorities all encompass tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG):
 - I. Reducing and preventing violence
 - II. Increasing trust and confidence
 - III. Better supporting victims
 - IV. Protecting people from exploitation and harm
2. The Mayor subsequently published the "[Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls \(VAWG\) Strategy 2022-25](#)," setting out actions to tackle issues and improve services. The Havering Community Safety Partnership (HCSP) serious violence needs assessment 2023 recommended that VAWG be retained as a key strategic priority locally.
3. VAWG accounts for the greatest socio-economic cost to community safety partnership services in Havering. Domestic violence also accounts for a third of all physical violence reported to agencies, with the Crime Survey for England and Wales 2023 finding that nationally 33% of violent offences were flagged by police as domestic abuse. Despite high levels of underreporting, the most recent estimate provided in the Crime Survey for England and Wales 2023 estimated that around four in five victims (81%) of partner abuse did not report the abuse to the police.
4. In 2023, the rate of calls to police regarding incidents or crimes in Havering marked as domestic-related equates to one call every 176 minutes. The Crime Survey for England and Wales 2023 estimated that 20% of people aged 16 to 59 (9.8 million victims) had experienced some form of domestic abuse since the age of 16, which means there are potentially around 40,000 survivors of domestic abuse currently residing in Havering.
5. Currently, Havering delivers a number of initiatives and services to address VAWG using four strands – Prevention, Provision, Protection, and

Partnership. The strategic vision is to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls through the development of policies and procedures to address violence, develop programmes of preventative work, provide high-quality services which respond to local needs, and ensure that robust enforcement action is taken against perpetrators.

6. The VAWG consultation survey results (*Appendix 3*) presents the findings from a comprehensive survey conducted to gather insights and opinions on violence against women and girls (VAWG) within the London Borough of Havering. The survey ran from 25 November 2024 to 17 January 2025 and received a total of 157 responses. The primary aim of this consultation was to understand the community's experiences, perceptions, and suggestions regarding VAWG.
7. Havering has aligned its objectives with those set out in the Mayoral Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy for London, and we have set the following aims:
 - I. Preventing and reducing VAWG
 - II. Supporting all victims and survivors
 - III. Holding perpetrators to account
 - IV. Building trust and confidence
8. The Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (*Appendix 1*) is to be delivered over a four-year period. The action plan will be refreshed annually to take into account emerging trends or developments in legislation or working practices. This strategy will be implemented and monitored by the VAWG Strategic Group, which reports directly to the Havering Community Safety Partnership. The strategic group will also have oversight of the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).

REASONS AND OPTIONS

Reasons for the decision:

The Council and other statutory partners have a responsibility collectively create a robust legal framework that supports the need for a comprehensive VAWG strategy. Highlighting the importance of protecting women and girls from violence, providing support to victims, and holding perpetrators accountable.

Several pieces of legislation support the need for a Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy in the UK:

- I. **The Domestic Abuse Act 2021:** This act provides a comprehensive legal framework to protect victims of domestic abuse. It includes measures such as the creation of Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Orders, and the establishment of a Domestic Abuse Commissioner to oversee the response to domestic abuse.
- II. **The Equality Act 2010:** This act requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity. Addressing VAWG is a crucial part of fulfilling these duties.
- III. **The Serious Crime Act 2015:** This act includes provisions to tackle coercive and controlling behaviour in intimate or family relationships, which is a significant aspect of VAWG.
- IV. **The Modern Slavery Act 2015:** This act addresses human trafficking and exploitation, which disproportionately affect women and girls. It provides measures to protect victims and prosecute offenders.
- V. **The Children Act 1989 and 2004:** These acts emphasise the importance of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, which includes protecting girls from violence and abuse.
- VI. **The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003:** This act specifically addresses the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM), making it illegal and providing protection for those at risk.
- VII. **The Sexual Offences Act 2003:** This act modernises the laws on sexual offences, providing clearer definitions and stronger protections for victims of sexual violence.

Other options considered:

Not to complete a strategy. This was considered but rejected given the legal requirements outlined above, as well the increasing risks and public interest in Violence Against Women and Girls.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

1. There are no financial implications arising from recommending the strategy for approval and/or from its approval. Whilst implementation of the strategy will have financial implications the expectation is that this will be met from within existing resources. Any issues arising would be addressed through the Councils usual budget monitoring processes.
2. Funding for Violence Against Women and Girls in Havering comes from the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) through the London Crime Prevention Fund (LCPF).

3. Any funding received will be governed and coordinated by the Community Safety Partnership via the Violence Against Women & Girls Strategic Group. Current funding arrangements are detailed in the following table.

Source of fund	Description of activity	Funding breakdown (if possible)	2025 - 2029
MOPAC LCPF	DA perpetrator programme	30,000	March 2029
MOPAC LCPF	IDVA SERVICE	135,000	March 2029
MOPAC LCPF	DA advocacy	30,000	March 2029

Legal implications and risks:

Not having a Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy can have several legal implications and risks for a local authority:

- I. **Non-Compliance with Legal Duties:** Local authorities have legal obligations under various acts, such as the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the Equality Act 2010. Failing to have a VAWG strategy could result in non-compliance with these duties, potentially leading to legal challenges and sanctions.
- II. **Increased Liability:** Without a VAWG strategy, a local authority may be more vulnerable to legal claims from victims of violence who feel that the authority failed to protect them or provide adequate support. This could result in costly legal battles and compensation claims.
- III. **Failure to Safeguard:** Local authorities have a duty to safeguard vulnerable individuals, including women and girls at risk of violence. Not having a strategy in place could be seen as a failure to fulfil this duty, leading to scrutiny from regulatory bodies and potential legal consequences.
- IV. **Human Rights Violations:** Violence against women and girls is a violation of human rights. Without a strategy to address and prevent such violence, a local authority could be seen as failing to uphold these rights, which could result in legal action from human rights organisations or affected individuals.
- V. **Reputational Damage:** Legal implications aside, the absence of a VAWG strategy can lead to significant reputational damage. This can erode public trust and confidence in the local authority, making it more difficult to effectively govern and serve the community.
- VI. **Missed Funding Opportunities:** Many funding bodies and grants require local authorities to have a VAWG strategy in place. Without one, the authority may miss out on crucial funding opportunities that could support services and initiatives to combat violence against women and girls.
- VII. **Ineffective Response to Violence:** Without a coordinated strategy, the response to incidents of violence may be fragmented and ineffective. This can

lead to higher rates of violence and repeat victimisation, which can have long-term legal and social consequences.

- VIII. Having a VAWG strategy helps mitigate these risks by ensuring that the local authority is proactive in addressing violence against women and girls, complying with legal obligations, and providing effective support to victims.

Human Resources implications and risks:

There are no HR implications in this decision.

Equalities implications and risks:

1. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to:

- I. the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- II. the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- III. foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'Protected characteristics' are: age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

2. The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

3. The associated EqHIA is attached to this report - Appendix 2

Health and Wellbeing implications and Risks

1. VAWG Strategy is a much-needed strategy for Havering as the demography of is changing, the economic burden is rising, and the proportion of domestic abuse-related crime has been substantial in recent years. Experiencing domestic abuse can have a profound detrimental impact on both the physical and mental wellbeing of both direct victims and those who witnessed the abuse repeatedly. For example, adverse childhood experiences could result in long-term mental health conditions and substance misuse, or the child growing up to become a perpetrator themselves.
2. The strategy recognises the importance of prevention, including secondary prevention after the first report or incident. Actions in the strategy specifically seek to support families to prevent re-offending through the introduction of DV caseworkers and IDVA, the interventions to the perpetrator and thus likely to have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing.

3. A further breakdown on health implications and socioeconomic can be found within the Equality and Health Impact Assessment – Appendix 2

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

There is no real impact expected from the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy on the environment or climate.

To help minimise carbon emissions, workers/ staff will be encouraged to use public transport where possible.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None