



Altogether Safer

**Reducing Violence against Women and Girls
in North Kent**

Annual Report 2017-18

**Funded by the Home Office Violence Against Women and Girls
Transformation Fund**

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If you have any questions regarding the Altogether Safer Project or would like further information, please contact:

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Altogether Safer will be happy to share information, materials and good practice on any element of the project.

Introduction

In December 2016, the Home Office announced that it had created a Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Transformation Fund and was inviting bids in early 2017 from Local Authorities and Health Authorities to support projects to address this issue. Gravesham's Community Safety Unit (CSU) saw this as an opportunity to work with some of our partner agencies to put together a programme of work to help reduce VAWG and submitted a bid in late February 2017. The announcement on the outcome of applications was unavoidably delayed due to the General Election but in early July notification was received that the bid had been successful.

Funding was agreed in full for our project (Altogether Safer – Reducing Violence Against Women and Girls in North Kent) and we have been awarded a total grant of £229,000 over three financial years from 2017-18 to 2019-20 (c. £76,300 p.a.).

Our partner organisations

Whilst Gravesham CSU prepared and submitted the funding bid, the delivery of the project is very much a collaborative effort between:

Gravesham Borough Council (CSU)

Dartford Borough Council (CSU)

Kent Police

Choices (formerly North Kent Women's Aid and specialist domestic abuse service provider)

Kent Equality Cohesion Council (KECC)

Rethink Mental Illness (known locally as Rethink Sahayak)

These partners have gone on to form the Altogether Safer Project Delivery Group.

It is also anticipated that as the project progresses over three years, further agencies and organisations, particularly partners of the Dartford and Gravesham Community Safety Partnership, may become involved/wish to support different strands of the project.

Altogether Safer aims to fill serious gaps in service provision by:

- Improving the availability and quality of services for victims of domestic abuse so that they are more accessible and meet victims' needs;
- bringing more offenders to justice;
- changing attitudes and breaking the cycle of VAWG through preventative work with boys and young men;
- increasing awareness amongst under-represented women/girls and encouraging them to report their experiences and access services available to support them;
- working with local communities to achieve a better understanding of any cultural barriers that could be influencing victims to remain silent and finding appropriate and acceptable ways of addressing these whilst remaining sensitive to cultural differences.

This Annual Report details activities that have been undertaken during the first year of the project. We hope that the information provided clearly demonstrates not only the considerable work that has been carried out in a short period of time but also the real commitment of the partner agencies and organisations working together to Altogether Safer. The consensus of the Project Delivery Group is that a very good start has been made in working towards improving the situations of the many women, girls and their families who have experienced or who may be at risk of violence.

The report considers each of the project's three distinct strands in turn and provides information on the steps taken and how obstacles encountered have been overcome. Monitoring information collated throughout the year is also provided to illustrate the impact made in raising awareness of VAWG, how identified gaps in services have been filled to improve the quality and accessibility of support for victims and the preventative work carried out to safeguard women and girls against a range of violent behaviours in future.

The Weekend/Out of Hours Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) Service (Police Station-Based)

One of the primary objectives of Altogether Safer is to help fill serious gaps that have been identified in service provision. The work of Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) locally has long been recognised as a vital resource providing victims with expert support and assistance once they have found the courage to come forward and report their experiences. Demands on IDVA services have always been high in North Kent and historically, the service has only been available weekdays (generally office hours) and IDVAs have been located separately from Kent Police colleagues. This meant that victims coming to the attention of the police e.g. at the weekend, would frequently have to wait until the following week for an IDVA appointment. The consensus was that this was too little, too late and that the delay in receiving this support was also likely to be contributing to a disproportionately high ratio of victims declining to support a prosecution in Dartford and Gravesham (42%: Kent Police).

The Project Delivery Group determined that a Police Station-based IDVA service on weekend nights would provide readily accessible, expert advice for victims and front-line officers – crucial engagement at the right time. This would potentially also reduce the risk of victims not supporting a prosecution by removing the time-lag between Police intervention and contact from an IDVA. This earlier intervention would also help to safeguard victims against potential re-victimisation.

To our knowledge, the weekend/out of hours' IDVA service is a new approach in our area and therefore, is acting as a pilot scheme that will hopefully establish good practice that can be replicated elsewhere. Detailed monitoring systems have been designed early on to ensure that the number of victims assisted, their circumstances and the impact of the services provided are recorded to inform any future 'toolkit' on the project's completion.

The Weekend/Out of Hours' IDVA Service is being delivered by Choices, a very well-established and respected domestic abuse service provider in Kent and a registered charity.

How and what has the Weekend/Out of Hours' Service delivered in 2017-18?

Integration into North Kent Police Station

Meetings were held between Choices representatives and Kent Police to agree the process by which IDVAs could be based at North Kent Police Station on weekend nights. This included determining their office needs with Kent Police providing the office accommodation, equipment and desk space. 5 IDVAs now form a pool of staff to deliver the service. These members of staff have been fully Police vetted and trained to use Police computer systems e.g. Genesis, STORM. Kent Police colleagues provided the necessary training sessions to the IDVAs (a total of 140 training hours were delivered) to ensure that all are proficient in the use of these databases and fully understand data protection and confidentiality parameters.

Kent Police underwent a major restructure in late 2017 and this saw the creation of a new Vulnerability Investigation Team (VIT) as part of its' New Horizons policing model and it was agreed that the IDVAs would be best placed working directly alongside VIT officers. Briefing sessions have been provided by a qualified IDVA trainer to police officers so that they have a

much better understanding of the IDVA role and how they can support victims during the 'golden hour' time of crisis.

As new members of staff have joined the Police VIT Team, an overview of the Out of Hours IDVA Service has also been provided to them. This clearer understanding of the capabilities of the service means that it is now fully embedded as part of the resources available to support victims of domestic abuse at North Kent Police Station. Consequently, the IDVAs have been able to support victims coming through the VIT as well as those simply reporting to the Police Station's front counter.

Due to the unavoidable delay in the project being able to commence, the IDVA service began operating in the autumn 2017. Although the service was initially intended to provide cover 12 hours during weekend nights, the pool of IDVAs trained meant that the project had the capacity to provide additional hours during week nights (Thursday and Fridays) as well as further hours at the weekends. This was seen as a good solution to recoup the hours lost earlier in the year whilst also having the additional benefit of allowing the project to 'test' demand for the service during other times of the week.

In September 2017, the Project Delivery Group was joined by visiting senior management from Kent Police including the Chief Superintendent with responsibility for partnership working. The Altogether Safer Project was then also 'showcased' as a good practice example of multi-agency working for improving local services for vulnerable victims as part of senior management's subsequent visit to North Kent Police Station.

In February 2018, the Project Delivery Group was joined by colleagues from the Office of the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner and Victim Support who were keen to establish whether they could also engage with our project to work together in assisting victims. As a result, the project's IDVAs and Victim Support are going to be working together to identify how they can share client information to ensure that best use can be made of the different types of assistance that each can provide. This will avoid duplication of effort, save time, mean that resources are more effectively applied and the service received by victims will be better tailored to their needs.

Whilst not part of our original plans, acknowledging the demand and valuable support that providing the Out of Hours Service on Thursdays and Fridays as well as at the weekend, the Project Delivery Group is exploring opportunities for funding to enable this work to continue. Gravesham Community Safety Unit will be seeking permission from the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner's Office to use funds from its annual Community Safety Grant in 2018-19 to cover the costs that will allow the service to continue to be delivered on Thursdays and Fridays in the new financial year.

Who has the service assisted?

Due to the late starting of the project and the reporting deadline to the Home Office for year-end monitoring, the data provided below relates to the period **1 September 2017-28 February 2018**. During this time, the service has supported 89 victims (**please note that by the time of writing this report, this figure had already increased to 94 victims**):

Service Users by Area

Count of service users by Area Area	18-25 years	All adults
Dartford	2	29
Gravesham	15	54
Other	2	6
Total	19	89

Service Users by Gender

Count of service users by Gender Gender	18-25 years	All adults
Female	18	87
Male	1	2
Other	0	0
Refused to answer	0	0
Total	19	89

Service Users by Age

Count by Age Age	Count	Count by Age Age	Count
<16	0	35-44	25
16-17	0	45-54	3
18-24	15	55-64	0
25-34	41	65+	0
Unrecorded	5	Total	89

Service Users and Number of Children in Households

Number of children in household	Client count 18-25 years	Client count All adults	Total number of children
0	8	31	-
1 child	5	18	18
2 children	6	29	58
3 children	0	8	24
4 children	0	2	8
5 children	0	1	5
Total	19	89	113

The significance of the number of children in households is not to be underestimated. Whilst the number of service users during this period was 89 individuals, the 113 children living in the households experiencing domestic abuse/violence are 'hidden' victims. By assisting and supporting these children's parents (the reporting victims), the service has also indirectly been safeguarding these children from potential harm.

Service Users by Ethnicity

Dartford and Gravesham have the most diverse population in Kent with higher proportions of their populations classifying themselves as being from BME communities compared to other Districts in the County. Gravesham has the most diverse population with over 17% describing themselves as BME. Across both Dartford and Gravesham the BME population averaged 14.9% as recorded in the last Census with approximately half this figure (7.6%) being female. Historically, cultural barriers and the stigma attached to victims who report domestic abuse/violence towards women and girls are believed to contribute to under-reporting within certain communities. Altogether Safer is working with our local BME communities through the third strand of the project (discussed later in this document) to influence a change in attitude. The project will be monitoring any increase in the proportion of victims accessing the Weekend/Out of Hours DVA service during its lifetime. Of the 89 victims in total considered here, 17 were from BME backgrounds (19.1% of the total). This is encouraging as it is demonstrably higher than the proportion of females from BME communities represented in the population as a whole.

Count of service users by Ethnicity	18-25 years	All adults
White: UK	14	71
White: Irish	1	1
White: Gypsy/Traveller	1	2
White: Other	1	2
Mixed ethnic background	0	1
Asian: Indian	2	8
Asian: Pakistani	0	0
Asian: Bangladeshi	0	0
Asian: Chinese	0	0
Asian: Other	0	1
Black: African	0	1
Black: Caribbean	0	1
Black: Other	0	0
Arab	0	0
Other ethnic group	0	0
Refused to answer	0	0
Unrecorded	0	1
Total	19	89

What kinds of support have victims received?

Victims have received a range of support services. This is primarily in the form of advice and assistance, signposting/referrals to other services able to support the victim, bespoke safety planning directly with the victim to improve the personal safety of them and their children and other tailored interventions to meet the victim's specific needs. Case studies are provided later in this document but below are just a few brief examples of the type of support provided:

- provision of security equipment e.g. door bars to secure doors from being forced open;
- referrals to Kent Fire & Rescue Service (KFRS) through the local Sanctuary Scheme. This allowing fire officers to assess what security improvements can be made to the

victim's home to enable them to remain in their own property and making arrangements for necessary works to be carried out;

- Working with other services (with a remit wider than domestic abuse) able to intervene and support victims. For e.g. one victim was being sent hate mail and targeted with anti-social behaviour by neighbouring residents because they incorrectly blamed the victim for the perpetrators behaviour. Local Authority officers were able to intervene and stop the behaviour which had been having a very negative impact on the victim;
- Co-ordinating joint activity between Police, IDVA and a victim's employer. This was necessary in to support a victim who was being stalked at her place of work rather than at her home. Initial assessment by Police had determined that the victim was not at high risk of imminent harm. However, the IDVA highlighted the seriousness of the stalking and harassment risk and the impact this was having on the victim and her ability to go to work. The IDVA then worked with Police and the victim's employer to put in place a number of measures so that potential risks could be managed whilst the victim was at her place of employment. The alleged perpetrator was ultimately arrested and bailed; the victim was referred to and is now being supported through the commissioned high risk service for the Dartford area.

Impact monitoring information collated by Kent Police (North Division)

Kent Police have also provided an analytical report that considered the types of offences being reported by victims accessing the Weekend/Out of Hours IDVA Service, the geographical areas (by Council Ward) where incidents took place and the crime outcomes i.e. action taken following report and investigation.

The data and information below relates to clients accessing the Service during the period 9 October 2017-9 February 2018 to provide a sample analysis of impact.

During this period, the client caseload of the Weekend/Out of Hours/IDVA Service was 60 clients.

In respect of the 60 clients, 7 reports related to secondary incidents whilst 43 of the 53 remaining reports related to offences of violence against the person (71.6% of all reports).

Offences reported by victims

Offence category	Count
Criminal damage	3
Public order	1
Sexual offences	6
Violence against the person	43
Secondary incidents	7
Total	60

Geographical locations in which offences took place

Whilst it is acknowledged that domestic abuse in its various forms may take place in more affluent as well as more socially deprived areas, 2 of the 3 Council Wards in which the greatest number of incidents took place are in Gravesham's urban areas that experience higher than average levels of deprivation. Northfleet North has historically recorded the greatest levels of deprivation in the Borough (Index of Multiple Deprivation 2017). The 2 Council Wards that are recorded as the 'least deprived', Meopham North and Istead Rise, do not feature at all.

These areas and other semi-rural locations across both Dartford and Gravesham may not have the same ease of access to support services as people living in more urban areas where services tend to be based and may experience greater geographical isolation. In view of this, the project may want to consider ways in which we can reach victims with information about services, incorporating this group into the project's work strand with BME and hard to reach groups in Year 2 and 3 of Altogether Safer.

Top 8 Wards – Locations of offences reported by Service Users

Council Ward	Number of offences
Northfleet North	5
Northfleet South	5
Riverside	5
Central	4
Pelham	4
Westcourt	4
Singlewell	3
Swanscombe	3
Total	33 (55.0% of total incidents)

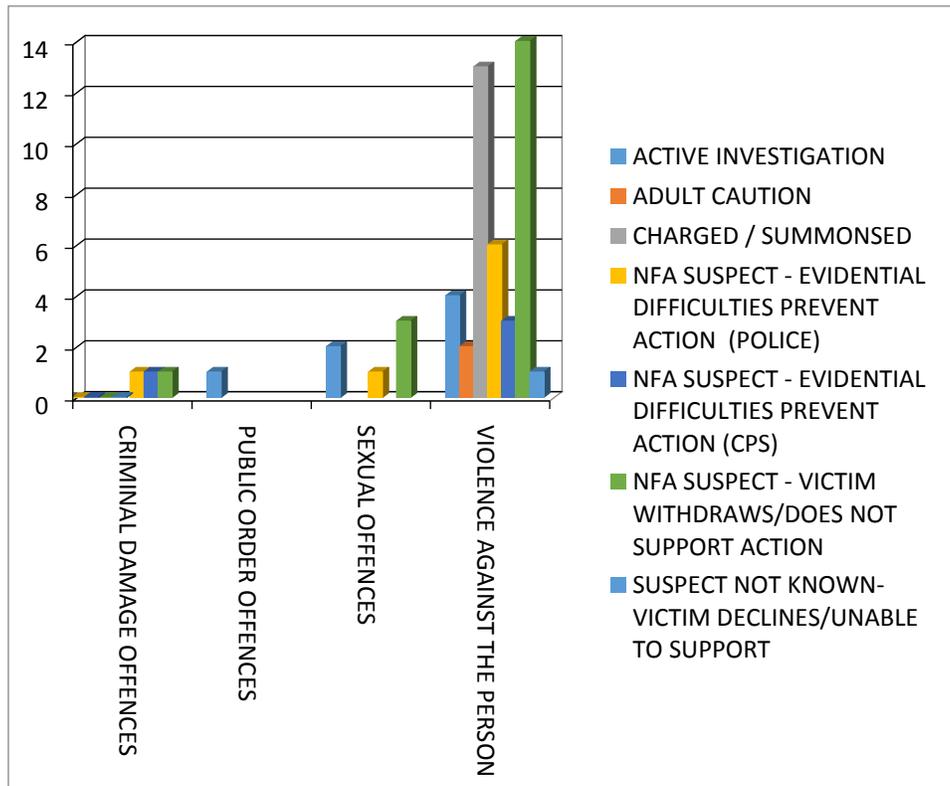
Crime Outcomes

In respect of the 53 offences reported (excluding secondary incidents), the table below details the outcome in respect of the different types of crimes reported.

- The proportion of completed investigations which were closed as the victim declined to support a prosecution was 39% (for violence against the person (VATP) offences it was 36%);
- The proportion of completed investigations that resulted in a charge was 28% (for VATP offences it was 33%). This is higher than the underlying charge rate of 13% in North Division for the rolling year to January 2018. However, it should be noted that this will be affected by the higher proportion of High Risk (42%) and Medium Risk (45%) compared to the underlying domestic abuse averages.

Outcome	Criminal damage	Public order	Sexual offences	VATP	Total
Active investigation	-	1	2	4	7
Adult caution	-	-	-	2	2
Charged/Summoned	-	-	-	13	13
NFA: Suspect-Evidential difficulties prevent action (Police)	1	-	1	6	8
NFA: Suspect – Evidential difficulties prevent action (CPS)	1	-	-	3	4
NFA: Suspect – Victim withdraws/does not support action	1	-	3	14	18
Suspect not known – Victim declines/unable to support	-	-	-	1	1
Total	3	1	6	43	53

Crime Outcomes



Weekend/Out of Hours IDVA Service – Case Studies

The following Case Studies have been provided by the IDVAs delivering the Weekend/Out of Hours Service in their own words to demonstrate the difference that their support has made to victims and the way the service has managed to fill ‘gaps’ that could otherwise have left the victim vulnerable and potentially unprotected against further violence or abuse. They also illustrate the collaborative approach that the Service has adopted with other partner agencies to better meet the victims’ specific needs that are often very different from case to case.

Case Study 1 – JS (New to seeking support)

Phoned JS as there had been an incident where her ex-partner had showed up at their property drunk and wanting to see the children. Police had booked an appointment to go out as she was not in immediate danger however this kept being pushed back due to emergency call outs. Police were due to attend at 7pm at earliest so I called at 6pm to check in with JS before then. JS was very anxious and worried as she had never spoken to Police before so didn’t know what to expect. I went through safety planning and emotional support with JS and also advised her of what to expect when Police did attend – I advised I could speak with them too if she didn’t want to go through it all again. The case was complex as it also involved a sexual abuse allegation involving another child so JS was understandably distressed. We talked for an hour until Police arrived. JS then called me back and said how helpful it had been to speak beforehand as then she felt less nervous when Police arrived. JS noted that the police officer had said he was very impressed we had “got in there before Police and spoken to JS” and he passed his details to JS for me to have. I took an Outreach Referral for JS as she had not scored as ‘High Risk’ and she is still being supported by the team. I was very happy with this case as JS had never had support before and possibly wouldn’t have had outreach support if it was only a Police attendance and it had not been offered to her.

Case Study 2 – Honour Based Violence (HBV)

In November 2017 I was asked to assist an officer in dealing with a lady who was a potential victim of HBV. I was introduced to her when she attended the police station to give her statement. Initially she was a little reluctant to report all incidents but after a conversation with me and being reassured that she would be supported and that police are here to help her and her daughter, she then gave more details and disclosed everything. She had been subject to years of physical, emotional and financial abuse along with threats to take her life.

I carried out lots of safety planning with her and while she remained at the station I called locksmiths on her behalf to arrange her having her locks changed as at this stage the alleged perpetrator’s whereabouts were unknown. I referred to the National Centre for Domestic Violence (NCDV) and ensured that they and police were aware of the code word she would use should she not be able to talk if her husband was in the home prior to his arrest. I suggested to the officer that her DNA was taken too as this was not initially considered and this was carried out. He was eventually arrested and she was referred to MARAC, has an IDVA and is now on the Freedom Programme and doing well.

I have spoken to her several times since her attendance at the police station and she informed me that she was ‘so grateful for the support, kindness and reassurance from the IDVA service’ and was glad I was there from the moment she came into the station so she could share everything.

Case Study 3 – Collaboration

Worked with a lady who I had picked up that we had contacted from STORM records. There were a few clarifications that were needed in the notes on STORM.

Discussion was had with the client and she expressed her concerns of her ex-partner breaching a Non-Molestation Order. The children had witnessed the abuse and the client had had all her belongings removed from the property.

From STORM it was unclear where she was actually from and where the children were staying. From our discussion we managed to clarify exactly where she was and who she was staying with. The safety planning was very useful and has included the following steps:

- providing police with a copy of her Non-Molestation Order;
- making sure she had a copy of the Non-Molestation Order and Occupational Order on her phone;
- completing a 'cocoon watch' with her neighbours;
- advising her to encourage her 7-year old to call the police if need be in the future;
- providing Salvation Army/Abacus advice for furniture, bedding etc. for when she moves back home;
- planning to complete a KFRS and Sanctuary Referral for her home (home security improvements);
- advising her about social media and securing her Facebook and emails;
- providing the Choices helpline number;
- encouraging her to support a prosecution;
- encouraging her to carry on reporting to the police

Client was very grateful to us for listening and providing advice while she was waiting for the police. All details were clarified on STORM for future reference. This client has since been referred into the Choices Freedom Programme and is on the waiting list.

Case Study 4 – Marie - Complex Needs

Client was arrested by Police because of another matter relating to her children. Marie (not her real name) disclosed to police that she was a victim of domestic abuse. She stated that she had been the victim of coercive control. My colleague who was working Out Of Hours (OOH), met with Marie whilst she was in custody along with the Officer in Charge (OIC) dealing with her arrest and spoke to her about the relationship and the control that she had been subjected to and that she had disclosed.

Client was distressed because of the circumstances in which she was arrested and stated that her family had been known to Social Services for a number of years. Marie acknowledged that she had not been able to adhere to a Child Protection (CP) Plan because of the coercive control that she had been subjected to and she stated that she had not disclosed this prior to this latest incident. This case did not meet the MARAC threshold. However, Marie was referred into Choices Outreach Services by the OOH IDVA.

During my work with Marie she stated that she had not been able to fully engage with the CP Plan that had been put in place for the children. She stated that she was not able to access the drug and alcohol services she needed because she felt that she had a "shopping list" of tasks that needed to be met to adhere to the CP Plan.

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Housing - the family were not in secure accommodation. There was housing debt because of drug use; she stated that her ex-partner provided the drugs and this impacted on the finances available to the family. Her housing was affected by this and ultimately they had lost the accommodation that the family were living in. Marie stated that in order to obtain secure accommodation she needed a guarantor which she did not have. She had contemplated leaving the relationship but because of the financial control (her partner had over her) she did not feel there were options available to her. At the time of my speaking with Marie it was not possible to support her into refuge, due to her unstable drug use and because of the ongoing Police case.

Referral made to another Housing Authority out of the area that she was currently staying in and the housing duty was picked up by that new Authority. Marie was, for the first time in years, in stable accommodation (albeit temporary).

Marie is now engaging with drug and alcohol services, she has completed on-line parenting courses and she is on the waiting list for the Freedom Programme. She is engaging with a solicitor to appeal a decision made by Social Services (as her children have been removed from her care). She is engaging with Police and has now made a formal statement to Police, recognising that the relationship that she has been in for 15 years had led to the chaotic conditions that the children and she had been living in.

Comments from Marie on closing her case.

Marie said that working with the OOH service started her journey on recognising the impact that the relationship had had on her life. She is having contact with her children and she wants her children back in her care. She said that she would not have been able to (access the services she needed), she was really down and the first contact with the IDVA had given her the hope that she would be able to make changes.

She could not thank the IDVA enough - she said she felt that she had not been judged and that she has been given hope for a better future.

Case Study 5 – Meeting specific needs

Victim rang into Vulnerability Investigation Team (VIT) office I spoke with her as her officer in charge of the case was not on shift.

Victim from the traveller community and wanted to retract her statement. She is currently in a refuge, having been assisted into the refuge by Police. I spoke with her at length as to the reasons why she might want to do this. She is 20 weeks pregnant and the perpetrator is remanded to prison.

I spoke about coercive control and whether she felt there were risks from the wider community and she stated that she was fearful of his family.

I asked where her family were and she stated that they were in Ireland. I asked her if I could call her back as at this point I had not spoken to officers regarding this case. I read the Genesis reports and then spoke with the Det. Sgt. It was decided that I would call the client's father as Genesis noted that he was supportive of his daughter.

I spoke with the father and he confirmed that he wanted his daughter back home.

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I asked whether there was any risk to her from her family in Ireland. Father added whilst there was a relationship breakdown with his daughter and her mother they wanted her back home. I asked whether he knew the perpetrator and he said that the perpetrator's family lived close by. I raised my concern with regard to the risk of this, he confirmed that she would be going to her brother's over a hundred miles away in another part of Ireland.

Det. Sgt., Det. Insp. and I went through travel options. Client did not have ID and therefore this would make travel almost impossible. Det. Insp. agreed for officers to go to the traveller site with client's permission to collect her ID. She sent a text to confirm that this is what she wanted and plans are now being made for her to travel with her father.

This work has shown excellent partnership working and a real understanding from officers of the needs of the victim.

The above is just a selection of examples of the real difference this joint approach is making to victims by providing the Weekend/Out of Hours IDVA Service at times when it would otherwise not be available as well as demonstrating the very tangible benefits of having the service co-located with specialist police colleagues.

Choose Respect Programme

Choices Choose Respect is a targeted programme for boys and young men aged 11-18 years displaying challenging, aggressive, controlling or anxious behaviours. The programme addresses factors influencing their behaviour through small group work and 1:1 sessions proven to reduce and prevent violent and aggressive behaviour. The use of social media as a tool for abuse and exploitation is also addressed through the programme.

Historically this Programme has chiefly been delivered in conjunction with schools and education providers but Choose Respect as delivered through Altogether Safer has been broadened. Referrals of boys and young men onto the programme are being accepted from Kent County Council's Early Help and Preventative Services and Troubled Families Teams, Youth Services, Kent Police, The Grand Project (CIC) (a locally based healthy living centre that provides a range of services directly to young people) and is also open to self-referral by young people themselves.

The key aims of Choose Respect are:

- to provide specialist support to boys/young men displaying a proclivity towards aggression to reduce their risk of violent offending;
- to challenge behaviours linked to VAWG exhibited by those referred onto the programme (including their use of social media/online activity) that is abusive;
- to try to address factors that may be contributing to their aggressive/coercive behaviour through interventions tailored to the boys/young men's needs to reduce their propensity to offend and protect women and girls from harm.

How and what has Choose Respect delivered in 2017-18?

Contact with schools could only begin at the start of the academic year in September 2017 due to the unavoidable delay in grant announcements but good progress was made in a very short space of time. Additional part-time workers were recruited to deliver the programme and to provide the capacity to recover any time lost at the beginning of the year and to make the initial aim of working with 60 boys/young men in Year 1 realistic and still a potentially achievable target by the year end. All secondary schools, including special schools, in Dartford and Gravesham were approached and introduced to the programme.

In Dartford, the 5 schools that have engaged with the programme are:

- Longfield Academy
- Rowhill School (Behavioural and Special Needs)
- Ebbsfleet Academy
- The Leigh Academy
- Wilmington Enterprise College

Choose Respect workers have also been successful in engaging with the local Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) which is an alternative educational provision for boys who cannot attend mainstream school due to their behaviour.

In Gravesham, the 6 schools that have engaged with the programme are:

- Northfleet Technology College
- St. George's Church of England School
- Meopham Secondary School
- St. John's Catholic Comprehensive School
- Gad's Hill School (private school)
- Thamesview School.

Workers have also been receiving referrals from Early Help and Preventative Services, Social Services (Kent County Council) and Kent Police.

Recognising that the target for Year 1 was ambitious in the timescale available, the Choose Respect Workers extended the scope to other agencies to be able to refer boys and young men to the programme rather than restricting the referral process to schools. This has included a very new approach (not taken before to our knowledge) for officers dealing with boys/young men being taken through custody at North Kent Police Station or coming to the attention of the Police Vulnerability Investigation Team, to be able to make referrals to the programme.

Choose Respect workers are also able to take referrals from the Kent Police Joint Family Management Programme Coordinator who works primarily with young people who involved in anti-social behaviour/low level criminality but who may also be displaying signs of aggressive behaviour or who may be in households that have historically or are currently experiencing domestic abuse.

In January 2018, another step was taken to increase awareness of the programme, increase referrals and enhance partnership working. A successful approach was made to The Gr@nd Project that has resulted in the Choose Respect workers having a hot desk at The Gr@nd's premises in Gravesend town centre. The Gr@nd is a healthy living centre that provides a wide range of services to the local community and particularly to young people. Some of the young people who use these services are not in education, employment or training whilst some may be have/be experiencing problems with their mental/physical health or have drug/alcohol dependency issues. Some may also potentially be more vulnerable to domestic abuse or exploitation, either as victims or perpetrators. The Choose Respect workers and the staff at The Gr@nd were not working together prior to this.

As a direct consequence, staff at The Gr@nd are able to refer individuals with whom they come into contact to Choose Respect in cases they feel it may be beneficial. In turn, the Choose Respect workers are able to signpost the boys and young men completing their programme onto the wide spectrum of activities and services provided by The Gr@nd that may help them into their career choices, developing their skills ready for employment, improving their social skills and their self-esteem.

Who has the service assisted and how have they benefitted?

During the period 1 September 2017-6 March 2018, the following boys and young men have been supported through Choose Respect:

- 15 boys are currently being supported in a group setting across 3 schools;
- 21 boys are currently being supported through 1:1 sessions;
- 7 boys have completed their support through 1:1 sessions.

Since September 2017, cases have been opened with a total of 45 boys, only 2 of which dropped their engagement within the first 2-3 weeks whilst a total of 43 boys have continued to be fully engaged with the Programme. **It should be noted that in this first year, referrals continue to be received and there is still a very reasonable likelihood that the Year 1 target of working with 60 boys or a number very close to this, will be met. At the time of writing there are 10 boys on the waiting list to commence the programme and access support which will already take the total to 55 as these referrals are processed.**

On completing the support programme, the boys and young men taking part are surveyed and interviewed to assess the impact.

Responses for the 7 boys who have already completed were as follows:

- 100% felt that their ability to be assertive had increased (for e.g. in not bowing to peer pressure to behave in a particular way);
- 100% felt that their aggression had decreased;
- 100% were able to identify strategies for managing their feelings;
- 100% felt that their understanding of their feelings had increased;
- 100% were able to identify respect, honesty and empathy as important for healthy communication;
- 85% were able to identify that abuse occurs in relationships because of power and control;
- 100% were able to identify self-esteem, assertiveness and healthy boundaries as important in a healthy relationship;
- 100% were able to identify 3 or more healthy relationship behaviours.

The 36 boys currently engaging with the programme will also be assessed against the indicators above on completion.

A very significant and positive outcome has been the workers' ability to engage with hard to reach boys that attend alternative education provision centres due to their behaviour. Centre staff have acknowledged that some of these boys have proved notoriously difficult to engage with but the Choose Respect workers have managed to build trusting relationships with them. This has allowed for honest, open discussions regarding their behaviour and attitude that has formed the basis for change. This may be because the workers are recognised as being independent of the educational sector and neither do they represent statutory authorities such as local Council staff or law enforcement agencies.

Choose Respect Case Studies

Please note that names have been changed to protect the client's identity.

Case Study 1 - Owen

Owen is a 15 year old boy currently attending a local secondary school. He has been diagnosed with ADHD, ODD and some ASD traits. Owen experienced domestic abuse as a child, perpetrated by his father to his mother. His father is no longer in the family home but Owen has contact with him. We received the referral for Choose Respect for Owen as he was mirroring his father's abusive behaviours towards his mother, resulting in verbal and physical attacks. He is aggressive to most people in authority, including school, resulting in exclusions. Owen has refused 2 previous programmes to help with his anger but following communication between Early Help (the referrer) and the Choose Respect worker, they managed to get Owen to feel able to start the programme.

On initial meetings Owen was closed and uncomfortable so the worker spent time focusing on building a good working relationship and trust with him, to enable him to feel comfortable before work began. Once this was achieved Owen spoke honestly regarding his feelings and where they come from, which the worker found to be anxiety based. With lots of work around communication, anxiety and confidence building Owen became able to focus in lessons and express himself better at home. The worker and Owen put together a personal anger management plan that worked at school and home for him to use new strategies to manage his feelings and also how to identify when he needed to calm down. With consent from Owen, the worker spoke with his mother to let her know about the anger management plan so this could be supported by mum at home.

When work began around relationships and gender roles it became apparent that Owen held some deep-rooted views regarding women and their place in society; they should cook, clean and not argue back. The worker used different interactive activities to break down relationships; what is healthy, what is not and what is abusive. Due to the trusting relationship previously built with the worker, Owen listened well and learnt a lot. He was able to identify types of abusive tactics and how power and control works in abusive relationships. He stated that before "he thought it was the victim's fault, but now could see how easy it is to be controlled by a girlfriend or boyfriend when you haven't learnt this type of stuff".

When addressing 'sex and consent' Owen expressed that he had never really sat down with an adult and discussed this topic and that he was glad he had the chance to as he had learnt the real facts which he felt would help him be more responsible in his own relationships.

Towards the end of the programme Owen started taking his mock GCSE exams. He had never before sat down to take any exam in his school career as his anxiety would be too much for him, resulting in anger and aggression towards staff. Now he was able to not only sit down and complete his first exams, but he received D's and C's. Owen was visibly proud of his achievement and his confidence was very high. He expressed that he finally felt good about himself and his future.

Owen set himself some personal targets for the Choose Respect programme: 1. Anger management; 2. Focus in class; 3. Build a closer relationship with his mother; 4. Focus on GCSE results.

At the beginning of the programme Owen scored himself 4/10 on controlling his anger – this was 9/10 post programme. Focus in class: pre-6/10, post 9/10. Relationships with his mother pre-5/10, post-9/10. Focussing on GCSE's pre-6/10 post 10/10.

continued

Owen's mum echoed this and stated that "home life is so much calmer now" and they can relax together and have fun. "Owen is so much more open and easy to talk to. If he does get stressed, he will express how he is feeling or take himself to his room to calm down".

Assessment figures show Owen's progress over the course of the Choose Respect programme but his outlook towards life, people and himself was the biggest achievement. Upon closing Owen felt positive and with the worker started looking at courses to take after he finishes school, which before he never felt he would be able to achieve. His abusive behaviour towards staff and his mother has stopped and they are building on a healthy family relationship at home.

Case Study 2 – Kyle

Kyle is a 15-year old boy who attends a Special Education Needs school, he is diagnosed with ASD. Kyle has witnessed domestic violence at home for many years perpetrated by his father towards his mother and although his father no longer lives at the home, his older siblings have mirrored some of these violent behaviours which Kyle has described as being "normal". Kyle does not trust Social Services or any support service as he has experienced them in his life for so long and so has historically refused all outside agency support. He had previously seen the Choose Respect worker in the school (delivering a whole class programme) and so felt he could engage with her.

Kyle is only half way through his programme, however, he has engaged so well a lot of progress has been made. He expressed that he felt comfortable, as the worker was more relatable and could understand him better than most adults he has to see. Kyle is currently in a relationship and so the worker was eager to get this part of the programme underway. Upon discussion and activities around healthy relationships, Kyle admitted that through completing the activities he realised he has some controlling ways and is possessive over his girlfriend. He also stated he feels if other boys/ men look at her he would have to "beat them up" and if she cheated he would beat her up too or get someone else to do it.

With being given a safe, non-judgmental space for Kyle to share these things the worker was able to break down his thoughts and what they really mean; how he views women, relationships, gender expectations and ultimately power, control and domestic abuse. In order to make the changes needed the young person has to be open about their views, so they can then be challenged appropriately.

Since then Kyle has stated he thinks more about how he reacts to things that would usually make him feel angry in his relationship. He has also been addressing his possessiveness and respecting his girlfriend's boundaries. He expressed that this has made the relationship much better, and he feels more positive about himself and how he behaves.

He knows this may not be an overnight solution but Kyle feels with time and effort he can start to be a better partner and a person who he can be proud of himself. Kyle has 6 weeks left on the Choose Respect programme, so the outlook for progression looks promising for not only himself but also for his future partners.

Improving access to services – reducing violence within BME communities and working with hard to reach groups

Dartford and Gravesham have the most diverse populations amongst Districts in Kent. The focus of this part of Altogether Safer has been to work with women and girls from our BME communities who make up over 15,000 individuals within our joint BME population (Census, 2011). Collaborative work between Kent Equality Cohesion Council (KECC) and Rethink Mental Illness (locally known as Rethink Sahayak) has concentrated on encouraging engagement with services by victims across BME communities (historically under-represented). Both of these agencies are extremely well-established in our area and have been actively involved in community development and strengthening community cohesion for many years. It was felt that it was crucial that this strand of the project be delivered by partner agencies with very strong credibility locally and who already have a sound network of links with community groups.

Awareness-raising, service promotion, peer-led support and initiatives to remove the stigma associated with seeking help within certain cultures, are all being used to break down barriers that may be preventing victims from coming forward. Activities (including some for women and girl-only audiences) have been delivered to provide environments in which victims can be empowered to discuss their experiences within their own communities, increase victims' confidence in the services available to them and encourage them to get the help they need.

How and what has this strand of the project delivered in 2017-18?

Both KECC and Rethink have been actively involved in organising and/or helping to deliver a range of community engagement events during the course of the year. Each of these has been used as an opportunity to open a discussion about issues linked to VAWG, increase awareness of services (including those introduced through Altogether Safer) and encourage accessing of assistance available. Several high profile community events at which this activity has taken place have included:

- The UK India Year of Culture Celebrations (organised by KECC, in partnership with Gravesham Borough Council and the Sharodia Druga) hosted by the UK Hindu Cultural Association and during which information on the project was shared with members of the local community;
- The Diwali celebrations at the Guru Nanak Gurdwara (Gravesend) and during the Festival of Light (Dartford);
- Interfaith events taking place across both Boroughs;
- Gravesham Festival of Christmas Lights;
- Community outreach in support of International Women's Day activities at the Guru Nanak Gurdwara (Gravesend)

It is important to note that many of the events above are particularly well-attended by women and children from BME communities and that the majority of workers at both KECC and Rethink are fluent in relevant languages other than English allowing those involved to overcome barriers in communication.

A major initiative delivered by KECC and Rethink (which is also going to be delivered in Years 2 and 3 of the project) was the organising and holding of a Women and Girls only conference and social event. The Sadi Awaaz Suno (Listen to our Voices) event took place on Friday 24 November 2017 – specifically leading up to the International Day for the Elimination of VAWG on 25 November.

The event was very successful and approximately 300 local women and girls attended (exceeding our original target of 150-200 attendees). They ranged from grandmothers and mothers for whom English is their second language to young professionals and newly arrived brides from the Indian Sub-Continent.

The event provided an open space for women and girls to gain a better understanding of issues affecting their communities and to be encouraged to voice their opinions. The conference was addressed by the following guest speakers who covered a range of issues relevant to VAWG:

Assistant Chief Constable Jo Shiner, Kent Police – specific work being undertaken by Kent Police to encourage victims to report to the police and to reassure the audience that any report will be taken seriously and treated with sensitivity;

Shahien Taj MBE, the Henna Foundation – honour based crime and on-line grooming;

Yasminara Khan, BBC – honour based violence and the use of social media;

Parni Dheensa, Include Me Too – dealing with child disability and overcoming barriers experienced within the Indian Sub-Continent community;

Dr. Manpinder Sahota, local GP – mental health and well-being.

Councillor Gurgit Bains, Gravesham Borough Council – encouraging women/girls to be actively involved in reducing VAWG by having an active role within their local communities.

The evening was presented and facilitated by Gurvinder Sandher, CEO (KECC) and Carol Gosal (Services Manager, Rethink Mental Illness) who explained the background to the conference, the Altogether Safer Project and reaffirmed the commitment of local agencies to working with local communities to protect women and girls from violence and abuse.

The event was also supported by Choices (represented by the Chief Executive, the Coordinator of our Weekend/Out of Hours IDVA Service and Choose Respect workers), Community Safety Units and Kent Police colleagues with specialist roles (Diversity, Positive Action, Vulnerability Investigation Team and Domestic Abuse officers/staff). Appreciating that a considerable number of women in attendance may have a limited understanding of spoken English, interpreters were used throughout the event to communicate the key points being raised by the guest speakers. They were also on hand during the social part of the evening to assist any members of the audience who might wish to speak more privately to service/agency representatives but who needed help with communicating their questions or with understanding advice being provided.

Sadi Awaaz Suno (Listen to our Voices) 2017



Cllr Gurmit Bains (GBC), Dr. Manpinder Sahota (GP), Asst. Chief Constable Jo Shiner (Kent Police), Gurneet Kaur, (Guru Nanak Dabar Gurdwara), Sonia Nyaar (KECC), Parni Dheensa (Include Me Too), Gurvinder Sandher (KECC)



Gurvinder Sandher, Kath Donald (GBC), Carol Gosal (Rethink Mental Illness), Asst. Chief Constable Jo Shiner, Suki Randhawa (Kent Police)



Approximately 300 women and girls attended the event in November 2017 as part of our activities in the lead up to International Day for the Elimination of VAWG



Carol Gosal, Shahien Taj MBE (The Henna Foundation), Yasminara Khan (BBC), Parni Dheensa, Asst. Ch. Const. Jo Shiner, Gurvinder Sandher

As part of our work to reach as wide an audience as possible with our local BME communities, KECC has led on the production of a short film, *Ladies Sangeet*, that examines a domestic abuse victim's silence. The film was shot within an Indian Sub-Continent, cross-generational context in order to connect with its' core audience. The entire cast was made up of local women and girls who volunteered their time and the script, filming and editing was all conducted in-house by KECC's, Sonia Nayar.

The film was screened for the first time at the conference and was very impactful. Its theme also tied in with one of the event topics and the discussion on the notion of honour within the Asian community. It will shortly be made available on YouTube and will hopefully also be used in a variety of venues e.g. Civic Centre television screens in waiting areas, at events and in working with smaller community and peer support groups. The intention is for further films to be produced each year of the project to raise awareness of different types of VAWG and services that are available. At the end of Year 3, these will become part of our project

end 'toolkit' of materials and resources that will be made freely available to other areas wanting to address these issues.

Feedback from the event

Attendees of the event were provided with a short survey to complete about the topics discussed and their views on how these affected their community with the following responses. 158 completed surveys were returned with the following responses:

<p>1. Has this event increased your awareness on how to access support services locally?</p> <p>80% of respondents confirmed that it had raised their awareness.</p>
<p>2. Do you feel that the issues raised today occur within the local community?</p> <p>70% felt that the issues raised at the event directly affected the local community.</p>
<p>3. Did you find the speakers informative and inspiring?</p> <p>75% felt that the speakers were informative and inspiring.</p>
<p>4. Would you like a similar event organised next year?</p> <p>90% stated that they would want to see a similar event taking place in 2018.</p>
<p>Various respondents provided additional comments including:</p> <p><i>'Wonderful event and excellent speakers'.</i> <i>'Really interesting speakers and wide number of issues covered. Very informative and inspiring'.</i> <i>'Very well presented and informative – thank you'.</i> <i>'Fantastic speakers – good job'.</i> <i>'Very well organised event – informative'.</i> <i>'It would be great if things could be translated into Punjabi so that all non-English speakers can all benefit from the good work that you do'.</i> <i>'Enjoyed the event, particularly the disability issues'.</i> <i>'Wonderful event and excellent speakers'.</i></p>

Kent Police also presented some questions in the survey regarding possible under-reporting of crime within the Asian communities and what might reduce any hesitancy/build confidence within local BME communities to report. Some of the feedback captured included:

- Hold local community meetings and open forums for people to discuss issues and report crimes;
- Increase diversity within the police force for more presence within the community;
- Talk to the local community;
- Have confidential call lines to report crimes;
- Police need to gain the confidence of the community and be more approachable.

As a direct result of the conference, 6 women came forward and accessed services following the event. Of these, 5 were from an Asian (Indian/Sikh) background; 1 was in the 20-30 age range and 4 between 30-40 years whilst 1 woman was from an Asian (Pakistani/Muslim) background and was aged between 30-40 years. As a result of accessing the services, these women have been provided with emotional support and confidence building to enable them to engage with services and there has been Social Services input in addressing their needs.

Building peer support

Rethink and KECC are also working within the community to encourage women and girls to support each other through peer support groups. The aim has been to develop one peer support group in Dartford and one in the Gravesham area.

At the end of this first year, 4 women have been identified in the Dartford area who are keen to become involved and an appropriate venue is now being sought to accommodate the group's meetings.

In Gravesham, 1:1 emotional support is being provided to 6 women who are meeting as part of a Rethink Sangam peer support group.

The intention is that both of these groups will be further developed and their membership increased during Year 2 of Altogether Safer.

General Awareness Raising

During the course of the year, the Project Delivery Group have tried to take advantage of any opportunities that would allow us to raise the profile of Altogether Safer and to encourage more debate of VAWG generally. As previously mentioned we have promoted services available at a number of community events specifically targeting local BME communities and hard to reach groups but the following have also taken place in addition:

- Information and advice stalls on a range of VAWG issues and our project were in place in Councils reception areas between Monday-Friday 20-24 November in the lead up to International Day for the Elimination of VAWG on 25 November;
- Promotion of services including the One Stop Shop at Dartford's Children's Centre;
- Promotion of services including the One Stop Shop at the Civic Centre, Gravesend;
- 2-page article was included in Gravesham's *Your Borough* magazine (Winter 2017-18 edition) covering the Altogether Safer project. The magazine was delivered to approximately 45,000 homes across the District shortly ahead of the Christmas period (readership of this edition is usually higher than average as at this time of year, the magazine contains details of events taking place during Christmas and the New Year);
- Both Dartford and Gravesham Borough Council's Cabinets have endorsed the publication by their Councils, of a Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement making clear their commitment to ensure that neither slavery nor trafficking take place within their organisations supply chains. Whilst at the current time, s.54 Modern Slavery Act 2015 does not place a legal obligation on local authorities to publish a statement as it does on certain commercial organisations and businesses, both Councils have chosen to do so as a matter of good practice.

Project Management and Governance

How is the project being delivered?

It was recognised early on by all involved that in order for Altogether Safer to be successful, partners' roles and responsibilities needed to be clearly defined and a structure put in place to ensure that progress would be effectively monitored at regular intervals. These steps would also allow emerging issues that could create a barrier to delivery to be spotted early on and successfully addressed.

The Altogether Safer Project Delivery Group held its' inaugural meeting in August 2017. The Group then met on a monthly basis until the end of the year and now meets on a bi-monthly basis. Coordination of the project is undertaken by Gravesham's Community Safety Unit (CSU) as Gravesham is the recipient of grant funding from the Home Office and is ultimately responsible for overseeing the project's delivery. To ensure that the project could run smoothly, the following steps were taken:

- Separate Service Level Agreements (SLAs) were created and agreed between Gravesham Borough Council and key partners (Choices, KECC and Rethink Mental Illness - Sahayak (August 2017));
- Draft Delivery Plan (operational document) was created and agreed (August-September 2017) by the Project Delivery Group;
- Financial cost centres were specifically created for this project as Gravesham Borough Council would be forward funding activity to maintain clear records of expenditure (September 2017) that would bear scrutiny.

In respect of performance monitoring, it was agreed that progress reports (in addition to monitoring returns to Home Office in accordance with the terms of our Grant Agreement) would be provided by Gravesham CSU to:

- North Kent Domestic Abuse Forum (bi-monthly);
- Dartford and Gravesham Community Safety Partnership (quarterly);
- Gravesham BC Management Team (annually).

In addition, Gravesham Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee will be receiving a copy of this annual report for information at its meeting in March 2018.

The Altogether Safer Partners

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Altogether Safer

**Reducing Violence against Women and Girls
in North Kent**

**Funded by the Home Office Violence Against Women and Girls
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