

Classification: Public

Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee

Date: 31 January 2023

Reporting officer: Domestic Abuse Coordinator/Community Safety Operations Manager

Subject: Draft Violence Against Women and Girls & Domestic Abuse Strategy

Purpose and summary of report:

To report the council's draft Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Domestic Abuse Strategy 2023-2026. The Strategy has been developed to ensure that the Authority is as effective as possible in addressing the challenges presented by VAWG and domestic abuse. It sets out the council's priorities, providing a framework for addressing the over-arching objective of preventing VAWG and domestic abuse through support, engagement, partnership working and communication.

Recommendations:

- (i) The Committee is asked to consider and comment on the content of the Strategy.

Key Implications:	
Item	Implications
Legal	The Council has a statutory obligation to work with partner agencies to address domestic abuse (Domestic Abuse Act 2021).
Finance and Value for Money	Any additional financial resources to enable the full delivery of the Violence against Women and Girls and Domestic Abuse Strategy will be identified as an action plan is developed. Co-ordinating the way in which the Council works to tackle domestic abuse should mean that the council's resources (staffing and other) are used more effectively, that support is provided earlier and ultimately, costs reduced by preventing problems from escalating. The council is in receipt of £33,090 per annum for 2021/22 and 2022/23 from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) for a Domestic Abuse Coordinator post which is with Dartford Council.
Corporate Plan	The Strategy contributes to the Corporate Plan objective: #1 People: <i>a proud community; where residents can call a safe, clean and attractive borough their home</i>
Climate Change	The action plan will take account of any implications of this work on the council's climate change commitments.

1. VAWG & Domestic Abuse Strategy

- 1.1 In 2022 the Government launched a new strategy to tackle domestic violence. The Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan sets out the Government's approach to reducing the amount of domestic abuse, domestic homicide, and suicides linked to domestic abuse, by stopping people becoming perpetrators and victims to begin with.
- 1.2 The implementation of Domestic Abuse Act has placed additional responsibilities on all Local Authorities. In Kent, Kent County Council (as the Tier 1 Authority in our area) has a primary duty to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and in other safe accommodation and has also been required to establish a Domestic Abuse Partnership Board to coordinate domestic abuse activities across the county.
- 1.3 As a Tier 2 Local Authority, Gravesham Borough Council is required to work in collaboration with Kent County Council and is represented and an active member of the Partnership Board. This strategy sets out the Gravesham's priorities and actions in playing its part to reduce the prevalence of Violence Against Women and Girls & Domestic Abuse. As such is evidences the council's commitment and statutory responsibilities and duties as a Tier 2 authority.
- 1.4 As with national policies, prevention of people becoming perpetrators and victims is at the forefront of this strategy.
- 1.5 Draft priorities were to the November 2022 meeting of this Committee. They were presented at the *Know, See, Speak Out - Be Domestic Abuse Aware* conference, hosted by the council on 15 November 2022, and attendees and other partners, agencies and parties were asked to formally comment on them during November/December 2022.
- 1.6 No requests to substantially amend these priorities have been received, but the discussions and activity during this period have been invaluable in the development of the strategy.

2. Appendices

- 2.1 Draft VAWG & Domestic Abuse Strategy

3. Background Documents

- 3.1 There are no background documents.

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Secondary Implications	
Risk Assessment	Failure to effectively support victims of DA will reduce public confidence in the Local Authority's ability to support individuals. Responding to DA in an unstructured and disjointed way will serve to keep any positive impact at a minimum and makes improvements less sustainable long-term.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<p><i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i></p> <p>a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of personal data or special category data or criminal offence data? A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website via the above links. No</p> <p>b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice? NA</p> <p>c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at gdpr@medway.gov.uk. Click here to start typing</p>
Equality Impact Assessment	<p>a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer. No</p> <p>b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer. Yes – victims frequently turn to the local authority for support and advice. Improving services to respond to DA will make a positive contribution to quality of life.</p> <p><i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i></p>
Crime and Disorder	This strategy sets out the council's priorities in respect of the objectives of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and accords with the council's Safeguarding Policy.
Digital and website implications	Communications and Reassurance is a fundamental part of the proposed Strategy. It is anticipated that, subject to approval and the development of a supporting Action Plan, there will be a wish to increase the information, support and assistance available to people experiencing DA on the Council's website.
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	The safeguarding of vulnerable young people and adults is a high priority for the Council and partner agencies. Victims of DA vulnerable to victimisation will receive more tailored support and assistance to protect them from future harm.