



Place Services Scrutiny Committee 15 April 2024

Report Title	Violence Against Women and Girls Task Group Recommendations – Update
Cabinet Portfolio	Safer Communities
Cabinet Member	Councillor Mancyia Uddin
Exempt Report	No
Reason for Exemption	N/A
Key Decision	No
Public Notice issued	N/A
Wards Affected	All
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Borough Priorities	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life.	X
	Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities.	X
	Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all.	X
	Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy.	
	Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture.	
	Be a responsible Council.	X

1. Summary

- 1.1 In 2023, the Place Services Scrutiny Committee published the findings of a Task Group report into the issue of Violence Against Women and Girls. The report made a series of recommendations for services across Community Safety, Licensing and Education to implement, with the aim of delivering improved understanding around the subject of violence against women and girls alongside measures and interventions to prevent further violence. This report provides the Place Services Scrutiny Committee with a progress report and an update on delivery against the Task Group recommendations.

2. Recommendation for Decision

Place Services Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- 1) Note this report and update on the recommendations made by the Task Group on Violence Against Women and Girls.**
- 2) Agree to receive an update in July 2024 on the outcomes of the Safer Streets 5 Programme delivered in the Borough.**

3. Purpose of this report

- 3.1 This report provides an update to Place Services Scrutiny Committee on the progress made on implementation of the eleven recommendations made by the Task Group in its report on the issue of Violence Against Women and Girls.

4. Background / Reason for the recommendations

- 4.1 On 21 June 2023, Cabinet approved the recommendations made by the Place Services Scrutiny Committee Task Group following a review of the response to the issue of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). Place Services Scrutiny Committee noted the feedback from Cabinet at a meeting on 26 July 2023 and, since that time, good progress has been made on implementation of the Action Plan as set out at Appendix A.
- 4.2 In June 2023, the Home Office announced the Safer Streets 5 Programme, inviting bids from Local Authorities with a focus on either anti-social behaviour or Violence Against Women and Girls. The priority area of VAWG aligned with the recommendations of the Task Group and the findings of the review and, therefore, a bid was made to the Safer Streets Programme for funding for projects to improve the Night Time Economy in St Helens town centre with the aim of reducing and preventing VAWG.
- 4.3 To inform the Safer Streets Programme bid, feedback from the St Helens Night Time Economy Forum assisted in shaping the proposed projects. Consultation was also completed with both visitors to the Night Time Economy (40 respondents) and with 40 employees within the Night Time Economy. This

engagement reflected the recommendations of the Task Group and directly informed the priorities within the bid.

- 4.4 In October 2023, the outcome of the Safer Streets Programme was announced, and the Council secured £201,000 to deliver training for employees in the Night Time Economy, improve street lighting at taxi ranks, employ Street Marshalls at key times and to offer a grant programme to promote the installation of CCTV in taxis. The funding has enabled greater engagement and enforcement activity by Merseyside Police and the Licensing Service, thereby ensuring that premises are offering a safe environment and complying with licence requirements. An innovative 'Safe Home Card' pilot has also been developed, offering funding for women to access safe transport home from the night time economy.
- 4.5 The Safer Streets Programme concludes on the 31 March 2024 and the actions within such were directly shaped and informed by the recommendations of the Task Group. Accordingly, good progress has been made on the delivery of the recommendations from the Task Group that relate to the Night Time Economy.
- 4.6 The Task Group also made other recommendations directly relating to engagement with schools on the issue of VAWG and positive progress has been made against these indicators as outlined below:
 - The inclusion of information to all schools via the Bulletin during both 2023 and 2024. Information was also sent to schools in respect of training needs on this issue.
 - A further recommendation related to the development of a Survey to share with schools on VAWG. The Survey was circulated in June 2023 and received 218 responses. The findings of this Survey indicate that most school staff have received training around VAWG (with staff tending to receive this training as part of their statutory safeguarding training) although there are some inconsistencies.
 - The PSHE and RSE Curriculums form a key part of the response to VAWG in schools. Schools told us that they generally feel they respond well to VAWG and there is evidence of good practice and initiatives being used. These include production of videos around the topic; mentoring programme where older pupils support their younger peers; workshops for pupils; and the use of specialist agencies and guest speakers. Schools also told us that they feel that more targeted training around VAWG would be beneficial and that they could strengthen their response further by having more resources on the issue; quality assurance of RSE and PHSE curriculum; and linking schools for networking and development.
 - Finally, a dip sample was completed of evidence taken from a 10% sample of schools. Findings included evidence of senior leader monitoring and challenging PSHE provision across their school; updates are provided to governors around PSHE as they are with other curriculum subjects and there

was a named governor for PSHE. 100% of responding schools stated that all statutory elements of PSHE education are covered and regularly reviewed. 86% of schools also detailed that their teachers are confident in delivering PSHE to pupils. 86% of schools sampled also stated that at the time (Summer Term 2023) they had attended St Helens Understanding Harmful Sexual Behaviour Training. This training supports the use of the PSHE and RSE curriculum in preventing HSB and VAWG. Schools will also utilise external speakers and agencies to cover topics in more details and through varied means. Lessons are also differentiated to address the individual learning needs of pupils. Where schools identified the requirement of additional support was around specific training for teachers in supporting pupils who identify as LGBTQ+. Finally, there was evidence of how schools identify the impact of PSHE lessons; this included student voice evaluations; book scrutiny; alumni and health data; qualifications; and review of units taught.

- 4.7 A further recommendation was made in relation to the potential development of a network to collaborate on the issue of VAWG with Halton and St Helens VCA. Officers have advised that this action will be taken forward during 2024 via the Safer St Helens (Community Safety Partnership) Community Grants programme, which has invited groups that are working to address VAWG, including domestic abuse, as a priority for funding.
- 4.9 The final recommendation made by the Task Group related to the need to consider the workforce of the Council. E-learning training specific to VAWG is currently under development. This will be added to the suite of training that includes Safeguarding Adults Awareness; Safeguarding Children Awareness; and the multi-agency partnership training offer that includes Child Exploitation; Domestic Abuse: the Impact on the Child; and Forced Marriage on-line workshop, all of which touch on elements related to VAWG.

5. Consideration of Alternatives

- 5.1 There are no alternative options for consideration as this report presents an update on the recommendations agreed by Cabinet following a Task Group on the issue of VAWG.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 Overall, positive progress has been made in the implementation of the recommendations from this Task Group as recorded at Appendix 1: Violence Against Women and Girls Task Group Recommendations – Update March 2024.
- 6.2 The findings of the Task Group directly shaped the Safer Streets 5 Programme for the St Helens Night Time Economy and further engagement with schools to ensure that this issue is highlighted in an age-appropriate way with children and young people.

6.3 It is proposed that the Place Services Scrutiny Committee receives a final report on the delivery and impact of the Safer Streets Programme in July 2024 following its conclusion.

7. Legal Implications

7.1 The Safer Streets Programme required a Grant Funding Agreement between the Home Office and the Local Authority.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 The findings of the Task Group report directly informed the development of the Safer Streets 5 Programme for the Borough. In total, officers secured £201,000 for the delivery of interventions to prevent VAWG in the Night Time Economy.

9. Equality Impact Assessment

9.1 The scope of the Task Group specifically related to the impact of VAWG. As such, this activity has been targeted to ensure that the outcomes have a positive impact on women and girls in the Borough.

10. Social Value

10.1 The measures within the Night Time Economy promote safety, with the wider aim of ensuring that the services provided are more welcoming and an inclusive environment for women and girls; therefore, these initiatives should have a positive impact on local businesses in the area.

11. Net Zero and Environment

11.1 There are no direct implications emerging from this report.

12. Health and Wellbeing

12.1 Prevention of violence is a core objective of statutory partners within the borough. The actions within the recommendations aim to prevent violence and the fear of violence experienced by women and girls.

13. Customer and Resident

13.1 The implementation of the recommendations within the Task Group report have provided a positive opportunity to raise awareness of the issue of VAWG across our communities.

14. Asset and Property

14.1 There are no direct implications emerging from this report in relation to assets and property.

15. Staffing and People Management

15.1 Consideration has been given to the resource implications in relation to the delivery of the ten recommendations within this review. Securing additional funding has enabled the mobilisation of delivery of the interventions relating to the Night Time Economy. Without the grant funding it is recognised that ability to deliver against some of the recommendations would be limited and this will be a challenge moving forward as the time limited funding expires.

16. Risks

16.1 VAWG remains a risk in our communities. The actions delivered as a result of the recommendations from this Task Group have had a positive impact, but the risks remain and require widescale societal change in order to prevent violence and to ensure that women and girls are safe within society.

17. Policy Framework Implications

17.1 Implementation of the recommendations made aligned with the Borough Strategy priorities of “Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life”, “Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities”, “Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all” and “Be a responsible Council”.

17.2 This activity also aligns with the national VAWG Strategy and the Merseyside Police & Crime Commissioner VAWG Action Plan.

18. Impact and Opportunities on Localities

18.1 The focus for the Safer Streets delivery has been the St Helens Town Centre Locality. This decision was based on police data identifying the town centre as a hot spot for crime alongside engagement with female staff in the Night Time Economy and with women visiting St Helens town centre. This locality was chosen as the area where the funding will make the biggest impact.

19. Background Documents

19.1 Report to Place Services Scrutiny Committee: ‘Violence Against Women and Girls Task Group’ (9 January 2023)

19.2 Report to Cabinet: ‘Scrutiny Review of Violence Against Women and Girls and Cabinet Response (24 May 2024)

20. Appendices

20.1 Appendix 1: Violence Against Women and Girls Task Group Recommendations – Update March 2024.