



**ISLINGTON**

In partnership with

# **Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy**

**2017 - 2021**

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## Foreword



### **Councillor Andy Hull, Executive Member for Community Safety, Islington Council**

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) in all its forms is completely unacceptable. One of my top priorities is to ensure that the council, together with our partners, is fully committed to preventing and tackling it. We aim to make our borough a fairer place. That also has to mean making it a safer place for everyone who lives here, especially in their own homes.

Violence against women and girls affects all communities, involves men and boys, and can feed into a wider cycle of violence. It is not a stand alone issue but rather one that is inherently connected to other serious social challenges that we face in the borough. The majority of young people caught up in gangs in Islington, for instance, have experienced domestic violence as children. It therefore requires a joined-up and coordinated response, involving the council, the police, the voluntary and community sector, other partners and the wider community. I am proud that this strategy has been developed in that spirit of partnership.

Our vision is for Islington to lead the way as a borough in which no form of VAWG is tolerated and where victims and their children know how and where to get the help they need. The implementation of the strategy will be underpinned by a robust action plan that will secure real change for our residents. All the organisations and individuals involved will be held to account to ensure that we deliver.

This VAWG strategy builds upon what has been achieved since we published its last iteration in 2011. It sets out our partnership approach and redoubles our commitment to intervene as early as possible to support survivors, children and their families to stay safe, report crimes and rebuild their lives. We know that exposure to VAWG early on in life has long term consequences and we recognise that domestic violence and abuse is the most reported form of VAWG in the borough. This is why we are committed to increasing the support for young people to help them understand and build healthy relationships. We also recognise that this is not only about physical violence and we need to do more to respond to the devastating impact of psychological abuse and coercive control, which is more of a problem than many realise.

Reporting incidents and accessing support is difficult for everyone, and we know that some communities and those with complex needs may experience additional barriers. This is why we are pleased to be continuing the close work between statutory services and the voluntary and community sector to meet the needs of Islington's diverse community.

We all have a responsibility to help put an end to VAWG and I thank everyone involved in formulating this strategy for their continued dedication to preventing all forms of VAWG in our borough, safeguarding our residents and supporting survivors to recover. It is vital work in which I hope we will all play our part.



## **Detective Chief Superintendent Catherine Roper Borough Commander, Camden & Islington Boroughs**

Any violence is unacceptable, and my policing teams and I are committed to supporting all victims and robustly managing offenders to make it clear that such acts will not be tolerated in our incredible borough of Islington.

This strategy focusses on the tackling of violence towards women and girls, and how the local partnership can prevent, educate and tackle any such behaviour which makes someone feel unsafe. Everyone has a right to feel safe inside and outside their homes, and have the confidence to live their lives without the threat of violence or abuse. Where violence is committed towards women and girls, there will be young boys and men who will be affected too. The damage that can be done to anyone involved in any such cycle of violence and aggression is immeasurable, and will impact upon people for the rest of their lives.

Through this partnership, I want to encourage people to come forward and to trust us to help them. I do not want anyone to feel alone or that there is no help available. There is help – and I guarantee that together we can find a way to support anyone who is a victim, and also their families. I know this is difficult, but the more we know then the more we can do. We will also help anyone who needs support to stop acting with violence and anger. Together we are committed to intervene early, and to help people live their life as they have a right to – safely, happily and with dignity.

I am proud to support this strategy, and will tirelessly work with partners across Islington in order to achieve our goal of ending violence against women and girls

# 1. Introduction

The purpose of this strategy is to set out our continued integrated approach to stop Violence against Women and Girls and improve the health and wellbeing of individuals and families who experience domestic violence and abuse, controlling and or coercive behaviour in the borough of Islington. It aims to build on our existing successful partnerships and to further increase public awareness and assist local communities, individuals, and family members to tackle domestic violence and abuse in the home and in their relationships.

Our aim is to promote a 'zero tolerance' approach to violence against women and girls and to ensure that through our service provision and delivery we offer a range of education and support services to assist. We know through our work previously and through research that domestic violence and abuse is still a very under-reported crime and that victims worry that making a complaint or speaking out may make the situation worse for themselves or for others often within the home. This means that we must ensure that what we offer is widely known and those affected can feel confident that when they come forward an appropriate array of provision is available. This approach is a priority for us as;

**7 women a month** are killed by a current or former partner in England and Wales.<sup>1</sup> This is testament to the fact that abuse and violence can escalate to the most serious extremes if no-one intervenes effectively.

**2.1MILLION people suffer** from some form of domestic abuse in the UK each year, with 100,000 of these considered to be at high and imminent risk of being murdered or seriously injured as a result of domestic abuse<sup>2</sup>.

**Women** are much more likely than men to be the victims of high risk or severe domestic abuse. 27% women have experienced domestic abuse in some form within their lifetime<sup>3</sup>. 95% of people referred to Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) or accessing an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) service are women.<sup>4</sup>

**130,000 children** in the UK live in homes where there is high-risk domestic abuse<sup>5</sup>. 62% of those children are directly harmed by the perpetrator of the abuse, in addition to the harm caused by witnessing the abuse of others.<sup>6</sup>

**2.3 years:** On average high-risk victims live with domestic abuse for 2.3 years before seeking help, and 85% of victims sought help five times on average from professionals in the

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<sup>1</sup> ONS (2015), Crime Survey England and Wales 2013-14. London: Office for National Statistics.

<sup>2</sup> [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160105160709/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776\\_352362.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160105160709/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_352362.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> The Crime survey for England and Wales 2014

<sup>4</sup> Safe Lives (2015), Insights IDVA National Dataset 2013-14. Bristol: Safe Lives.

<sup>5</sup> Safe Lives (2015), Getting it right first time: policy report. Bristol: Safe Lives.

<sup>6</sup> Caada (2014), In Plain Sight: Effective help for children exposed to domestic abuse. Bristol: Caada.

year before they got effective help to stop the abuse.<sup>7</sup> Domestic Violence and Abuse has a higher rate of repeat victimisation than any other crime.<sup>8</sup>

Our strategy builds upon what has been achieved since 2011 and sets out our priorities for tackling domestic violence and abuse over the next four years. Our previous strategy promoted partnership working to ensure that staff are continually skilled in identifying domestic violence and abuse and guided the partnership in the development of a wide range of services to support survivors and children and this remains a priority.

We aim to identify victims and offenders at an earlier opportunity and work together to intervene effectively to prevent violence from escalating and to tackle re-victimisation. We need to offer more joined up and co-ordinated support to young people within the borough. We need to build positive healthy relationships and address the risks posed by the rising trend of the inappropriate use of technology and social media which in the last two years has seen rapid acceleration.

Whilst the partnership acknowledges and supports the VAWG principles held by central Government and London Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime (MOPAC) it is worth noting that we want to whole heartedly include children and young people within our strategy and our delivery plan. In Islington we are committed to keeping children and young people safe and Domestic Violence and Abuse is one of our three priorities for the Islington Safeguarding Children's Board underpinning our work for 2017 and going forward.

This VAWG Strategy does not stand alone - the themes and issues are interwoven in other strategies and areas of work across the partnership. For example, our Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy 2016, Early Help Strategy 2015-2025 and our Youth Crime Strategy 2015.

In order to identify and prioritise our work we have consulted widely and listened to feedback from our residents, partners and children and young people<sup>9</sup> and the 5 areas were identified -

- prevention and early intervention**
- **the provision of effective services**
- **a strong partnership response**
- **addressing perpetrator behaviour**
- **responding to the complex pressures on individuals**

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<sup>7</sup> Safe Lives (2015), Insights IDVA National Dataset 2013-14. Bristol: Safe Lives.

<sup>8</sup> Home Office, July 2002

<sup>9</sup> Please see the VAWG Strategy Consultation Report 2015 for more details.

## 2. Definition of Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)

The term “Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)” is both a form of discrimination and violation of human rights. Islington has adopted the definition set out in the Mayor’s strategy on Violence against Women and Girls.

The United Nations defines Violence against Women and Girls; “as any act of gender-based violence that results or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, that is directed at a woman because she is a woman or acts of violence which are suffered disproportionately by women.”

These include the following:

- **Domestic violence and abuse**
- **Coercive and controlling behaviour**
- **Sexual violence including rape**
- **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**
- **Forced marriage**
- **Crimes in the name of “honour”**
- **Stalking**
- **Prostitution and trafficking**
- **Sexual exploitation**
- **Girls and gang violence**

For the purpose of our work Islington adopts the government definition of Domestic Violence and Abuse:

**“ any incident or pattern of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality”**

This includes:

- Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person dependant by isolating them from sources of support, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape, and regulating their everyday behaviour
- Coercive behaviour is an act or pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim
- This definition also includes so called “honour” based violence, female genital mutilation and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group

### **Islington approach to men and boys within VAWG**

This strategy is focused on the needs of women and girls and is a deliberate response to the disproportionate impact of VAWG crimes on women and girls. This does not mean that men are never victims of, for example, rape, forced marriage, sexual exploitation or domestic violence and abuse, or even that women are not sometimes perpetrators. Just over a fifth (22%) of domestic offences in Islington in 2016 involved a female perpetrator.

The term violence against women and girls can be accompanied by concern about the exclusion of men and boys from services and a lack of recognition that men and boys can

experience these forms of violence and abuse. We recognise the gendered nature of these forms of violence and abuse (that women and girls are more likely to experience); therefore, the responses we are developing are based on the understanding that women and girls **disproportionately** experience these forms of violence and abuse.

This definition also helps us to understand that some VAWG areas are gender specific such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). It is important that men and boys are included in all aspects of the strategy, particularly our prevention and awareness raising work.

The partnership is committed to increasing reporting rates and providing support and appropriate services for male and Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender (LGBT) victims. We will therefore work to ensure that agencies develop clear pathways to support all victims of domestic violence and abuse. We also see high levels of domestic violence and abuse where the perpetrator is a family member of the survivor and not an intimate partner - 23% of relationships known are familial, with the suspect being a son, daughter, grandchild, brother, sister, cousin, uncle or other family member of the survivor and this is addressed within our plan.

We know that children are affected by domestic violence and abuse, and that early childhood experiences of living in a family setting where violence and abuse occurs will have negative impact on a young people's wellbeing and development later in life. We are committed to addressing the links between domestic violence and abuse and trauma in childhood. Where known at least 25% of the young people believed to be in a gang or affiliated to in Islington have suffered domestic violence and abuse in their past. We will continually work with schools to address aggressive and often angry behaviour in young men to assist them in understanding that domestic violence and abuse is not normalised behaviour.

'I just thought it was normal to argue and fight – sometimes it got physical. It's what I saw at home as I grew [...] It was scary when I was smaller, but then I got strong and I realised that I could make people listen to me that way. I didn't know how to talk to people to sort things out – girls, friends, family. I didn't know any different" (Tom\*, 17).

## **National and legal context**

In 2010 Government published its "Call to End Violence against Women and Girls" which has detailed through a series of action plans ways to address domestic abuse across all agencies and local authorities. The new National Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2016-2020 underpins our work to understand and better support the needs of BAME, LGBT and disabled women who are also survivors of VAWG<sup>10</sup>. Safeguarding practices across London have also been supported by the Pan London Violence against Women and Girls Strategy published in 2014 which "outlined a bold and ambitious approach, making London a national and global leader in seeking to end VAWG"<sup>11</sup>.

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\* Not his real name

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-to-end-violence-against-women-and-girls-2016-to-2020>

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/gla\\_migrate\\_files\\_destination/Pan-London%20Strategy%20on%20Violence%20against%20Women%20and%20Girls%202013\\_17\\_1.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/gla_migrate_files_destination/Pan-London%20Strategy%20on%20Violence%20against%20Women%20and%20Girls%202013_17_1.pdf)

VAWG is prevalent both in Britain and globally. According to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) there has been an increase of 'violent crime offences against women' but there is still an under reporting. In 2015 an estimated 1.4 million women experienced some form of domestic violence and abuse in the UK, whilst 31% young women aged 18-24 reported having experienced sexual abuse in childhood.

According to a survey commissioned by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, which sought the opinions of 8,000 Londoners, only 39% of respondents to the survey agreed that London is a safe place for women and girls. Additionally Transport for London (TfL) commissioned research found that 15% of women had experienced some form of unwelcome sexual behaviour on public transport. In the 'Draft Police and Crime Plan for London 2017-2021 – Consultation Document', MOPAC have stated it is a goal to reduce violence against women and girls in London and change the culture that enables this to happen, empowering women and girls to take control and be treated equally. MOPAC have published a refreshed London Violence against Women and Girls Strategy 2017 – 2021. The refreshed Strategy will set out shared commitments to investing in services to support survivors while also addressing wider prevention and criminal justice service issues that undermine our ability to address repeat victimisation and offending.

In 2015, the National Troubled Families programme was expanded to include domestic violence and abuse in the wider set of problems families may be experiencing. In 2014, the Care Act was also expanded to include new duties to support vulnerable adults experiencing domestic violence and abuse. This acknowledges the risk posed to older and vulnerable people and helps those working with them to recognise abuse. The extension of the definition of domestic violence and abuse in 2013 to include young people aged 16 and 17 has helped increase awareness that young people in this age-group experience domestic violence and abuse, encouraging more of them to come forward and access the support they need.<sup>12</sup>

Alongside the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004, the Serious Crime Act 2015 and the Care Act 2014, there is a strong framework supporting the VAWG work. This has included the introduction of coercive control offences for domestic violence and abuse cases. As well as the introduction of the criminalisation of Forced Marriage and the mandatory reporting of child female genital mutilation cases by teachers, health professionals and social workers; as well as the use of FGM Protection Orders. There was also the introduction of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 which can be used to address the cross border issues around Trafficking.

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme - known as Clare's Law – was rolled out nationwide in 2014. It gives members of the public a 'right to ask' police where they have a concern that their partner may pose a risk to them or where they are concerned that the partner of a member of their family or a friend may pose a risk to that individual. Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) and Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) were rolled out across England Wales in 2014. DVPOs are a new civil order power that fills a "gap" in providing protection to victims by enabling the police and magistrates courts to put in place protective measures in the immediate aftermath of a domestic violence and

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-definition-of-domestic-violence-and-abuse-to-include-16-and-17-year-olds--2>

abuse incident where there is insufficient evidence to charge a perpetrator and provide protection to a victim via bail conditions.

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, made it a criminal offence to force someone to marry. Forcing someone to marry is now a criminal offence in England and Wales. The Government remains focused on prevention and increasing support and protection for victims and those at risk of becoming victims. It has published several important pieces of guidance for public authorities including the multi-agency statutory guidance on dealing with Forced Marriage (2014). We need to examine how all agencies can work more effectively together to safeguard against forced marriage and 'honour' based crimes and prosecute perpetrators. Including increasing the use of 'Forced Marriage Protection Orders' for victims.

In 2014, the Forced Marriage Unit dealt with approximately 1,300 cases of forced marriage (FM), of which 79% were female, 21% male and 11% involved minors. It is estimated that between 2010-2014 there were 11,000 cases of so called 'honour' crime recorded by Police UK forces and approximately 12 'honour' killings are carried out every year. Disturbingly, these figures do not reflect the full scale of the abuse, with many more cases unreported.

### **Control and Coercion in the context of domestic violence and abuse: using section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015**

A new offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in intimate relationships has been created by Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015. The aim of this act is to provide the means to take action in situations where key aspects of a person's life are controlled by their partner – their finances, where they go, who they see, how they dress etc. Proving coercion requires a different approach to evidence gathering. It is about establishing a pattern of behaviour rather than proving individual incidents took place.

### **CEDAW**

The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women recommendation 19 on violence against women particularly asks "states to consider family violence and abuse, forced marriage, dowry deaths, acid attacks and female circumcision as prejudices and practices that may justify gender-based violence as a form of protection or control of women."

### 3. Violence against women and girls in Islington: our current picture

#### What we do know is that:

- Domestic violence and abuse is the most widely reported form of VAWG.
- Rates of domestic violence and abuse have been increasing over time in Islington, as elsewhere, rates were 60% higher in 2015/16 than in 2011/12.
- During 2015, Islington police recorded 2,260 Domestic Violence and Abuse offences with 2,100 female survivors living in Islington.
- Domestic violence and abuse affects all groups of women, but younger age, poor health, deprivation and unemployment are associated with higher rates.
- The impact on children and young people is considerable: over 1,000 (over 50%) assessments are made annually by children's social care in Islington as a result of domestic violence and abuse.
- 221 Domestic Violence MARAC referrals were made in Islington in 2015/16
- Islington has higher levels of sexual offences than the London average - those aged 16-29 are at highest risk. This could be because it is better reported.
- Harmful Practices including honour based violence and female genital mutilation (FGM) are underreported across the country and this is replicated in Islington.
- Fewer perpetrators are being brought to justice across London. In Islington the detection rate for domestic violence and abuse offences has fallen from 53% in 2010/11 to 39% in 2015/16/
- Every year, the specialist domestic violence and abuse services in Islington work with over 1,500 women experiencing domestic violence and abuse.
- Islington is a richly diverse borough with a well-established voluntary and community sector. We are only able to meet the needs of our diverse population through a positive relationship with community partners.

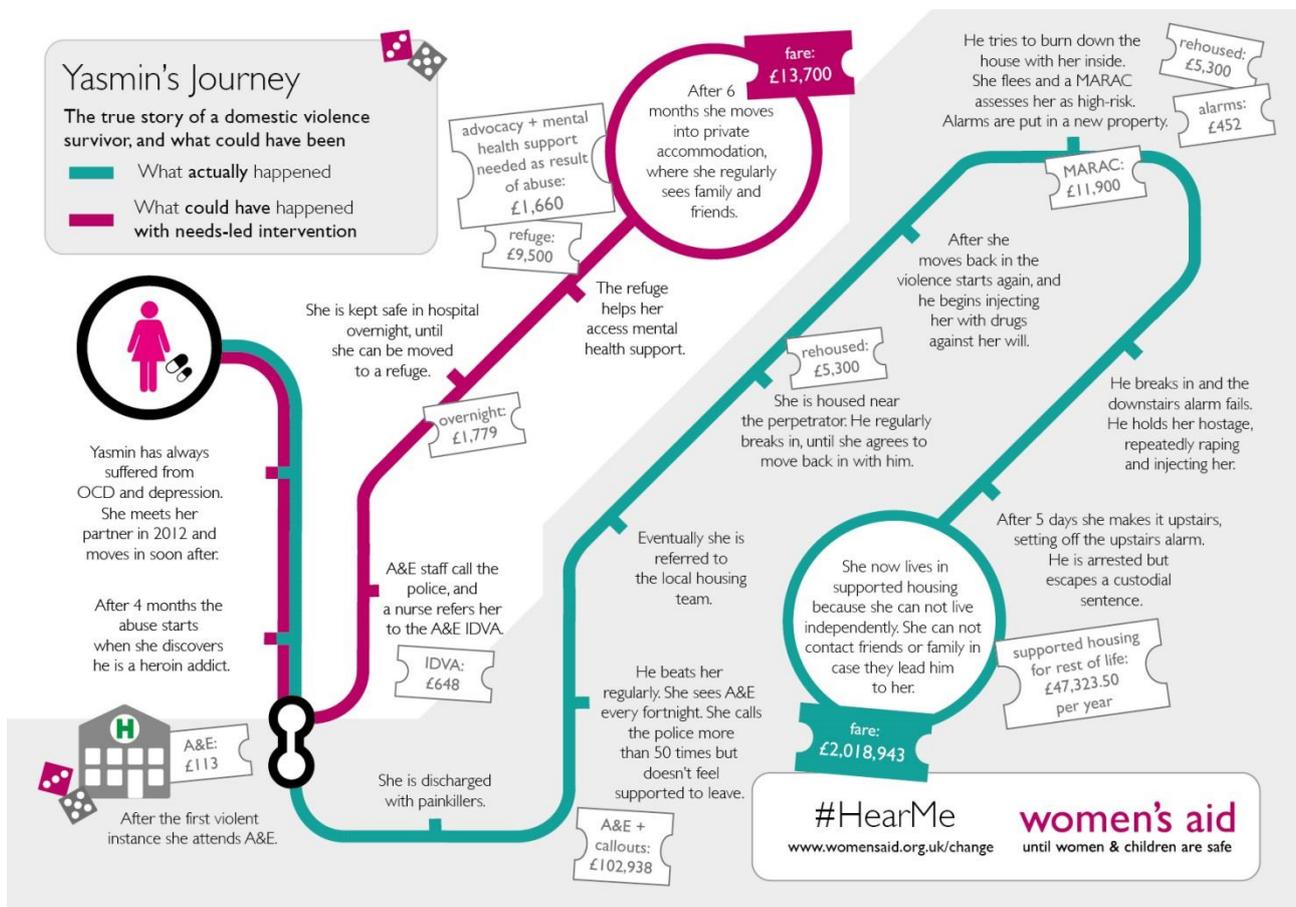
## Case studies

### Carly\*<sup>13</sup>, 35

Carly has been homeless or unstably housed for many years, and is a chaotic alcohol, heroin and crack user. She also suffers from depression and Personality Disorder. She has two children – both are in the care of a family member outside of London. Carly was physically abused as a child and has had a number of abusive boyfriends whilst living on the street. Some have stolen from her, others have been physically violent and one forced her to sell sex to pay for their drugs.

The hostel in which Carly was staying referred Carly to the Domestic Violence MARAC as they were concerned about the high risk posed by her increasingly violent boyfriend. The Domestic Violence MARAC discussed Carly's case and made housing and other support recommendations. The police also undertook a visit to Carly with an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) to let her know of the support options and encourage her to report the abuse she was experiencing.

Carly is now living in supported housing and receiving support from a local service who work with clients like Carly who have complex needs and require intensive interventions. She has sustained her tenancy for a year and is now accessing support services to help her to recover and build an independent life off the streets and free from abuse.



Reproduced here with permission from National Women's Aid: <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/our-approach-change-that-lasts/>

<sup>13</sup> Not real name

**Bêrî<sup>14</sup>, 23**

Bêrî arrived in the UK from Turkey at the age of 19; unknown to the authorities this was through a forced marriage. Bêrî has a 2 month old baby and was referred to a specialist (Black Asian Minority Ethnic Refugee) BAMER Domestic Violence and Abuse Support and Capacity Building service by a Children's Centre. The Children's Centre also contacted the council's Children's Services about the risk to the child.

Bêrî disclosed that she has experienced ongoing physical, emotional, verbal, sexual and financial abuse from the perpetrator and his mother. She was not allowed to leave the home alone and was prevented from learning English which meant that Bêrî was very isolated and could not tell anyone about the abuse.

The BAMER Domestic Violence and Abuse service supported Bêrî to move into a refuge. The service also helped her access legal support including injunctions to keep her safe from the perpetrators and to address her immigration status. The case was also reported to the Forced Marriage Unit for investigation. Bêrî and her daughter are living in another borough where Bêrî has a supportive cousin and the BAMER Domestic Violence and Abuse Service continue to support her.

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<sup>14</sup> Not real name

## 4. Priorities for action

Following wide consultation and our internal review of activity we have identified our priority actions for 2017-2021. These are:

- **prevention and early intervention** - raising awareness and increasing social intolerance

We consider this a priority as domestic violence and abuse has a huge negative impact on outcomes later in life. Intervention, particularly in early childhood, can prevent individuals developing a propensity for domestic violence and abuse. In our Early Help and Family Support Strategy 2015-2025, Domestic violence and abuse is identified as a key issue to tackle through our work with children, young people and families. Awareness and education around forming positive relationships and safeguarding young people in their use of social media and technology is crucial in addressing harmful behaviours that may lead to violence. It has become apparent when we have looked at our young people who have joined gangs or have come to the attention of the police and our Youth Offending Service that violence within the home is often an ordinary feature of their lives and this cannot be seen as normal for young people growing up in our borough.

- **the provision of effective services** - vulnerable children and adults are at the heart of our response

We consider this to be a priority as it is essential that victims and children caught up in domestic violence and abuse in all its forms, including emotional and psychological abuse to receive a prompt and appropriate service to support them and meet their needs. We need to ensure that we are clear about what we offer to the people of Islington and that it is local, accessible and responsive to their needs. We aim to ensure that victims are not passed around between services and to work together to coordinate support and address gaps in our service provision. Whilst we accept that for many community support through church and religious centres as well as age appropriate services will be what people seek. We want as a partnership to ensure we know what is available so we can build on developing other provision where needed to link and work collaboratively.

- **a strong partnership response** - coordinated community

We consider this a priority as Islington has a wide range of organisations and individuals committed to supporting victims, and working with those families where domestic violence and abuse is prevalent. We want to build on our collaborative working practices and extend it within our service delivery. We aim to look at ways to co-locate our services and build on our successful existing partnerships such as MASH (multi-agency safeguarding hub) in borough and work with other partners. One of the main drivers for updating our strategy was recognising that as individual services we all offer approaches to victims and the children often caught up in the domestic violence and abuse but collectively we can

reach so many more people and collectively we can make more of a difference to their lives.

- **addressing perpetrator behaviour - make victims safer and reduce reoffending**

We consider this to be a priority to ensure that children, young people and families affected by domestic violence and abuse are well informed about the legal and protective measures available to them. We also consider that where it is safe to do so we want to work in a holistic way with all family members and look at engaging perpetrators in programmes designed to reduce harm and future offending. We consider that for a wide range of people they would, with the right approach be able to change their attitudes and behaviour to domestic violence and abuse. We will promote ways for information about previous offences to be shared to allow people to make informed choices about their relationships which will reduce the risks young people face. We consider that in Islington we should offer a balanced approach offering intervention if needed and supporting criminal sanctions where appropriate.

- **responding to the complex pressures on individuals – support with wider issues**

We consider it a priority to understand the complex pressures that people in the borough are under that prevent them from exiting abusive relationships or leaving households where domestic violence and abuse is taking place. We recognise that for many the perpetrator will be a loved one, and the Perpetrator may be caring for them or the victim is dependent on the perpetrator for their care. The partnership aims to work better with our colleagues in housing and adult services to support residents to manage limited resources such as housing, finances and access to benefits to prevent people feeling that they have no option but to remain in violent situations. We want to give all people freedom to make choices where they haven't been able before.

We also aim to work much closer with young people to actively understand the pressures they experience. We will promote safeguarding behaviours that reduce inappropriate use of social media and skill up our young people to recognise the softer subtle signs of domestic violence and abuse such as sexting, body shaming and sending sexual images. We also aim to ensure that children are not harmed in domestic violence and abuse situations and that parents act appropriately to safeguard children in their care to avoid these risks.

Islington recognises that there is a high human cost as well as financial cost to services. Islington also recognises that some communities can experience barriers to accessing support or the right services. These include; Black Minority Ethnic Communities (BME), Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgender (LGBT), disabled communities, Travellers and Refugee and Asylum seekers. Our commitment will ensure that we work to reduce the impact on communities and continue our commitment to provide accessible services and address the gaps that exist.

## 5. Partnership VAWG action plan

### Priority 1: prevention and early intervention – raising awareness and increasing social intolerance

Action
1.1 Ensure the delivery of a coordinated training and education campaign across Islington that clearly articulates our zero tolerance towards any domestic violence and abuse and / or harmful practices and all VAWG areas. This includes identifying training needs (levels) for professionals', community groups and faith groups, Islington Safeguarding Children's Board and Safeguarding Adults Board to work together to set expectations for training and practice.
1.2 Ensure that all multi agency front line practitioners receive training to develop the appropriate skills and knowledge to identify, respond and support domestic violence and abuse and the wider VAWG practices e.g. sexting and on line exploitation, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and so-called 'honour based violence' and other Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) areas.
1.3 Identify an earlier response by using appropriate screening tools consistently across the partnership to identify risks and ensuring all partners are aware of what is available in Borough around VAWG and can signpost in an effective, timely way. Continue maternity and health visiting screening of all women and girls, to promote Safe lives DASH form, the Barnardo's Matrix young people's tool and develop FGM tools.
1.4 Use VAWG data better to intervene earlier and to understand and address the trends in the borough. This includes interfamilial violence, the relationship between gangs and serious youth violence and poor patterns in early childhood. We will develop a collective partnership data scorecard which will use to check our progress and inform our work.

## Priority 2: the provision of effective services - vulnerable children and adults are at the heart of our response

Action
2.1 Continue to deliver appropriate support using a wide range of gender and culturally sensitive services with clear referral pathways for survivors /victims, professionals, friends and families, with a particular focus on increasing age-appropriate services. Recognising that all services have a role to play – from universal to specialist, highlighting the importance of the role that the voluntary and community sector play to address the diversity of need in Islington.
2.2 Ensure that the 'safe spaces' in the borough already established for those at risk of gangs and hate crime are gender and culturally sensitive and able to support those fearing domestic violence and abuse and sexual violence.
2.3 Support everyone in Islington to be aware of what is available to respond to domestic violence and abuse and VAWG services, knowing where to get help. We will maintain an up-to-date service directory and clear pathways for universal, community based and specialist services.
2.4 Include clear expectations in new contracts that domestic violence and abuse is identified and responded to appropriately by commissioned services including early help, youth services, adult services, mental health, sexual health and substance misuse.
2.5 Provide trauma-informed services to minimise the harm caused by domestic violence and abuse. This includes specific commissioned services such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty against Children (NSPCC) Domestic Abuse Recovering Together (DART) programme as well as trauma-informed universal, targeted and specialist services for families.
2.6 Ensure any barriers are challenged and removed so that everyone receives the level of service and support they require. We will focus on any inequality or discrimination reported to ensure that everyone has an inclusive voice through equal participation, consultation and service user engagement at all levels. Including engagement with all partner services within Islington.

### Priority 3: a strong **partnership** response - coordinated community

Action
3.1 Ensure that Children Service's 'front-door' is strengthened in practice by specialist domestic violence and abuse and VAWG expertise to assist with signposting and timely and appropriate referrals to specialist services; whilst providing specific support for women and their children.
3.2 All partners to review their policies and practices around VAWG issues to ensure that if clients present with these, the right information, offer of service provision and other signposting or referral pathways are universally offered across the borough
3.3 Develop a joint commissioning approach for a comprehensive range of interventions across the spectrum of domestic violence and abuse services to address the gaps identified in our comprehensive mapping exercise in 2016.
3.4 Continue to monitor and review the partnership contribution to successful outcomes in our domestic Violence MARAC and wider service delivery, and hold to account those agencies who do not deliver through our partnership governance arrangements.
3.5 Develop a communication plan that covers both organisations and the community as a whole that promotes and supports a 'zero tolerance' approach to violence against women and girls in Islington.

## Priority 4: addressing perpetrator behaviour - make victims safer and reduce reoffending

Action
<p>4.1 Evaluate and review our current offer for perpetrator support programmes to ensure that we have an effective approach to working with those perpetrating abuse. Provide support to those perpetrators identified as willing or open to change to address the cycle of domestic violence and abuse. We will explore different approaches to work specifically with those young males from age 7 years that are beginning to show signs of aggressive or harmful behaviours.</p>
<p>4.2 Ensure that the criminal justice system works for Islington in response to VAWG cases. We will strengthen the relationship between the police, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), courts, prison and probation services to ensure perpetrators are effectively processed while victims are fully supported.</p>
<p>4.3 Support victims to access the appropriate criminal and civil sanctions and processes to reduce reoffending and further victimisation. We will share knowledge and support local and national initiatives to prevent offending i.e. use of the domestic violence disclosure scheme (Clare's Law), the use of domestic violence protection notices and orders, Forced Marriage Protection Orders, Modern Slavery and stalking legislation, amongst others.</p>
<p>4.4 The partnership will work with all communities to ensure the message of zero tolerance around unacceptable practices and violence against women and girls is strengthened across the borough.</p>

## Priority 5: responding to the complex pressures on individuals

— support with wider issues

### Action

#### 5.1 Economic and environmental

- Recognise the pressures put on those living in abusive situations, especially as housing and benefit pressures increase and housing moves are less available.
- We will support residents to escape economic dependency by maximising their income and supporting them to secure gainful employment. We will also raise awareness of changes to welfare and benefits, and advertise these in receptions, clinics, with partners.
- We will develop clear housing pathways and offer earlier support to identify realistic housing options.

#### 5.2 Age-related pressures for younger and older people

- Ensure a consistent offer across primary and secondary education and youth provision to support young people to develop healthy relationships and challenge the normalisation of sexual violence and peer-on-peer abuse. This includes universal and targeted offers as part of Personal Social and Health Education, Healthy Schools, Targeted Youth Support and Youth Offending Service interventions.
- We will explore digital opportunities to reach young people in ways that work for them.

#### 5.3 Housing

- Evaluate and review the current housing options in the light of the huge decline in the availability of affordable housing the council faces.
- To develop clear housing pathways and offer earlier support to identify realistic housing options; ensure the sanctuary scheme is one element of a package offering support and protection to clients experiencing domestic violence and abuse, who wish to remain in their homes.
- To provide information around Reciprocal arrangements and action against perpetrators where tenancies are in their name.
- To scope and review policies to see where VAWG cases can be picked up under the current legislation to support clients.

#### 5.4 Other pressures

- Recognise the impact of disability on vulnerability and the ability to exit abusive relationships/situations. We will take a strategic approach to multiple and complex needs.
- We will also ensure our services are aware of and able to respond to cultural and religious pressures, especially around forced marriage and those with no recourse to public funds, and those at risk of FGM and other harmful practices.

## 6. Islington services

In Islington we have a range of universal, community-based and specialist services and interventions to prevent and address domestic violence and abuse. These are provided by a number of different organisations across the partnership, from health, local authority and criminal justice agencies and a variety of specialist voluntary and community sector organisations. These services work with individuals and families at different points in their journey to prevent domestic violence and abuse, keep individuals and families safe and to support recovery.

Services include: healthy relationship programmes in schools, Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVAs), adult and children's social work and safeguarding, recovery group work for parents and children, (FGM) clinics, housing support and a Domestic violence and abuse refuge, and a range of culturally-specific services.

### What next?

The 2016 VAWG Needs Assessment and Service Mapping showed that we need to do more at an earlier stage to prevent domestic violence and abuse from taking place. We want to do more to support young people to address trauma they may have witnessed in their lives and address harmful attitudes and behaviours early on. We also want to do more to support lower-risk cases to avoid escalation and limit the harm. These two areas will be a focus of delivery for the *'prevention'* and *'provision'* priorities in this strategy.

- We will continue to commission Domestic Violence and Abuse services (for women and men)
- We will continue to work in partnership with all of our partners so we can improve agency responses to provide appropriate and accessible services
- We will continue to work with the community in Islington
- We will continue to prioritise safeguarding as an issue for children and vulnerable adults
- This strategy will be translated into a detailed action plan in order to deliver these objectives

## 7. Measuring impact

It is important to us to ensure we are getting it right for everybody in Islington and that it continues to be a safe borough in which to live and work. As individual services we collect performance information on our work but to collectively ensure that we are making a difference we will devise a set of performance indicators agreed by the partnership to measure Violence against Women and Girls, including domestic violence and abuse and the impact we are having. These will be reviewed quarterly by a range of strategic partnership boards such as the Islington Safeguarding Children's Board and our Safer Islington Partnership (SIP).

Alongside the national picture, including the difficulties of being able to gather accurate VAWG data, the local picture is the same. Islington holds some data mainly around domestic violence and abuse. We know that we need to gather further VAWG data in the borough to be able to understand the prevalence in the borough, to understand the local picture and then be able to act to reduce harm towards women and girls who are at risk. The key themes identified under each priority will be delivered through a detailed partnership action plan that will include a performance monitoring framework. This will be subject to regular scrutiny at the VAWG Strategic Board. This close monitoring, alongside new risks or opportunities identified, will allow for changes to this strategic approach as required.

This strategy will be formally reviewed in 2020; however the action plan will be monitored closely as described above.

## Appendix i: Glossary of terms

Types of VAWG <sup>15</sup>	
Domestic Violence and Abuse	A pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse. In extreme cases this includes murder. Controlling behaviour is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour. Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.
Female Genital Mutilation	Involves the complete or partial removal or alteration of external genitalia for non-medical reasons. It is mostly carried out on young girls at some time between infancy and the age of 15. Unlike male circumcision, which is legal in many countries, it is now illegal across much of the globe, and its extensive harmful health consequences are widely recognised.
Forced Marriage	A marriage conducted without valid consent of one or both parties, where duress is a factor.
“Honour” based violence	Violence committed to protect or defend the ‘honour’ of a family and/or community. Women, especially young women, are the most common targets, often where they have acted outside community boundaries of perceived acceptable feminine/sexual behaviour. In extreme cases, the woman may be killed.
Prostitution and trafficking	Women and girls are forced, coerced or deceived to enter into prostitution and/or to keep them there. Trafficking involves the recruitment, transportation and exploitation of women and children for the purposes of prostitution and domestic servitude across international borders and within countries (‘internal trafficking’).
Sexual violence including rape	Sexual contact without the consent of the woman/girl. Perpetrators range from total strangers to relatives and intimate partners, but most are known in some way. It can happen anywhere – in the family/household, workplace, public spaces, social settings, during war/conflict situations.
Sexual exploitation	Involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where someone receives ‘something’ (e.g. food, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, protection money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the person’s limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability. Girls involved in or connected to gangs are at risk of sexual exploitation by gang members.
Stalking	Repeated (i.e. on at least two occasions) harassment causing fear, alarm or distress. It can include threatening phone calls, texts or letters; damaging property; spying on and following the victim.

<sup>15</sup> MOPAC: [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/vawg\\_strategy.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/vawg_strategy.pdf)