

Cabinet

16 February 2023

Warwickshire Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2023-2026

Recommendation

That Cabinet approves the Warwickshire Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2023-2026.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Warwickshire Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Board has worked collaboratively to enrich the local response to the VAWG agenda. The previous Warwickshire Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy covered the period 2015-2018.
- 1.2 In July 2021, the Government published its updated Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy¹. Given the VAWG agenda remains a high priority of the Safer Warwickshire Partnership Board (SWPB), the Warwickshire VAWG Board (a sub-group of the SWPB) committed to developing a local Warwickshire response and developed their own VAWG Strategy.
- 1.3 The Warwickshire VAWG Board agreed that the new Strategy would be broadly structured in line with the Government's strategic themes to ensure consistency between national and local approaches to VAWG.
- 1.4 A local 'Call for Evidence' was commissioned across the county to directly contribute to the development of the Strategy. Over 650 local members of the public, victim-survivors, and professionals were engaged in this. A multiagency officer VAWG Strategy Task and Finish Group was also established to develop the Strategy and its associated Delivery Plan.
- 1.5 The Warwickshire VAWG Strategy 2023 – 2026 has been endorsed by the:
 - Safer Warwickshire Partnership Board (SWPB)
 - Violence Against Women and Girls Board (VAWG); and
 - VAWG Strategy Task and Finish Group.

¹

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1033934/Tackling_Violence_Against_Women_and_Girls_Strategy_-_July_2021.pdf

- 1.6 The Strategy focuses on the delivery of four key priorities and objectives which include:
1. Prioritising Prevention: To challenge the attitudes, behaviours and societal norms which foster VAWG by raising awareness and the understanding of them, and by intervening early where possible to prevent it. The Strategy seeks to ensure that everyone understands what healthy relationships look like and to recognise the signs of abuse, and work to better understand how to prevent the cycle of abuse.
 2. Supporting Victims: The ambition is to provide high-quality, fit for purpose, joined up provision for victim-survivors, ensuring that VAWG partners collaborate to meet the needs of all Warwickshire communities. The Strategy seeks to address the barriers that prevent people telling someone about the abuse and violence that they are experiencing.
 3. Pursuing Perpetrators and Reducing Re-offending: This will be facilitated by working collaboratively across the VAWG partnership agencies to pursue perpetrators and to engage those who offend in behavioural change interventions to stop the harm to victim-survivors, their families and the wider community.
 4. Strengthening the System: The Strategy will provide the framework to continue to strengthen Warwickshire's partnership response to create a whole system approach to tackling VAWG. Working together, professionals across the partnership will develop a consistent understanding and response to VAWG
- 1.7 The implementation of the Strategy will be led by the VAWG Strategy Task and Finish Group and overseen by the VAWG Board. The Task and Finish Group have begun to develop a delivery plan, which will be annually refreshed and reviewed by the VAWG Board on a quarterly basis.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 There is no direct budget allocated towards the delivery of the VAWG Strategy per se, therefore partner agencies will be responsible for delivering and financing their relevant actions from the strategy within their own resources, and by utilising the opportunities to draw down external funding to assist its delivery – for example 'Safer Streets' funding².
- 2.2 The Council's contribution is already reflected within the funding allocated towards the domestic abuse commissioned services, sexual violence and assault support services, the Community Safety Team, and the Domestic Abuse Support Team/Caring Dads.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/safer-streets-fund-continues-to-make-streets-safer>

- 2.3 The Council also receive financial contributions from partners towards the delivery of VAWG related activity. This includes contributions from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) towards the Warwickshire Domestic Violence and Abuse Service (WDVAS); and contributions from all Warwickshire District and Borough Councils, Warwickshire Police, the OPCC and the ICB towards the delivery and co-ordination of Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) and Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs).
- 2.4 The Council has a new duty under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to assess the need for accommodation-based support in its area and prepare a strategy to provide such support for victims of domestic abuse and give effect to the strategy. Accommodation-based support is defined as support, in relation to domestic abuse, provided to victims of domestic abuse, or their children, who reside in “relevant accommodation” which is also referred to as Safe Accommodation. “Relevant accommodation” is defined in the legislation and includes various types of specified accommodation that is provided either by a local housing authority, a private registered provider of social housing or a registered charity whose objects include the provision of support to victims of domestic abuse or a sanctuary scheme. This new duty has been reflected within the Warwickshire Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021 – 2024. To deliver the new duty, the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities³ (DLUHC) allocated new burdens funding to the Council via a section 31 grant. This funding is ringfenced for the delivery of support to those who live within ‘relevant, safe accommodation’. “Relevant accommodation” is defined in the legislation and includes various types of accommodation specified in regulations that is provided by either a local housing authority, a private registered provider of social housing or a registered charity whose objects include the provision of support to victims of domestic abuse or a sanctuary scheme.
- 2.5 Both the Council’s General Fund allocations and the DLUHC grant will be utilised for the Council’s domestic abuse commissioning activity.
- 2.6 The Council’s Finance Team have reviewed the guidance and opportunities for maximising both the DLUHC funding and the Council general fund allocations and are supportive of the domestic abuse commissioning proposed approach.
- 2.7 There is an opportunity to access funding via the Government's Safer Streets initiative. As part of the VAWG Strategy delivery, partners will work together to allocate funding totalling over £350,000 to deliver environmental improvements in areas of Nuneaton, Rugby, Leamington and Stratford alongside additional communications and awareness raising campaigns.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-support-within-safe-accommodation/delivery-of-support-to-victims-of-domestic-abuse-in-domestic-abuse-safe-accommodation-services>

3. Environmental Implications

- 3.1 The Warwickshire VAWG Strategy sets out Warwickshire's three-year partnership approach to ending VAWG in Warwickshire, thereby creating a safe space and environment for women and girls.
- 3.2 The Safer Streets Fund was introduced to deliver evidenced crime prevention activity, and specifically designed to reduce VAWG and increase women and girls' feelings of safety in public spaces. The Warwickshire partnership has collaborated effectively to secure Safer Streets funding to address issues affecting the local community, for example enhancing CCTV. Use of this funding was focused on locations in the county where women and girls told partners they felt unsafe and incorporated community feedback to create safer spaces for all.
- 3.3 Environmental improvements have been delivered in areas of Atherstone, Nuneaton, Rugby, Leamington and Alcester alongside a communications and awareness raising campaign. Information on the interventions in each area can be found at the following link: <https://safeinwarwickshire.com/safer-streets/>.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 Several documents, policies, and strategies have contributed to developing Warwickshire's response to VAWG, including the Warwickshire Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021-2024 and the Safer Warwickshire Serious Violence Prevention Strategy 2022 - 2027. The key objectives of these include:
 - A focus on improving the safety of women and girls in public spaces via more visible and effective policing.
 - The need to rebuild trust and confidence in the criminal justice system by trying to deliver better outcomes.
 - Ensuring victims are treated with respect and dignity.
 - Acknowledging the widespread traumatic impact of VAWG and protecting and supporting victims and their families and friends at the earliest opportunity.
 - Enhancing the response to perpetrators of VAWG through emphasising the importance of early intervention and prevention, holding perpetrators responsible for their behaviours and actions, and driving down re-offending.

Overall, these Strategies together outline the work being done and to be done, to make Warwickshire a safer place.

- 4.2 To support the implementation and delivery of the Strategy, the VAWG Strategy Task and Finish Group will:
- Develop a set of measures to monitor the impact of the strategy.
 - Identify, develop, and seek necessary approvals to undertake joint commissioning and service development opportunities to prevent and reduce VAWG; and will identify and apply for funding opportunities where appropriate.
 - Undertake regular consultation to ensure that the delivery plan reflects the on-going thoughts and concerns of the professionals, the public and victim survivors.
- 4.3 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed on the Strategy, which raised no concerns. Of note, the Strategy is gendered focussed, and therefore does not focus on males as victims of VAWG related crimes. The VAWG board are exploring completing a separate piece of work to consider the experiences, impact and service response needed for male victims.

5. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

- 5.1 If approved by Cabinet, the Warwickshire VAWG Strategy 2023-2026 will be published by 31st March 2023. Implementation and delivery will immediately follow.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Warwickshire Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2023-2026.
Appendix 2 – Draft Warwickshire Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy Delivery Plan 2023-2026.

Background Papers

N/A

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): N/A This is a countywide matter.

Other members: Councillors Jonathan Chilvers, Jeff Clarke, Jackie D'Arcy and Jenny Fradgley