

Report of the Community Safety Partnership to the meeting of the Wellbeing Board to be held on Tuesday 28th of November 2023

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Subject:

This report provides the Wellbeing Board with an overview of the District's strategic approach to addressing issues relating to the 'Safety of Women and Girls' (SOWG)..

Summary statement:

The report identifies the national, regional, and local priorities, along with good practice in delivering an effective SOWG Strategy: It identifies a system thinking approach in addressing challenges. By acting collectively and taking a place-based approach we can work towards creating an environment where the safety of women and girls is a shared responsibility, contributing to the breaking down of barriers and the promotion of a culture that values and protects the well-being of all women and girls.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:

An equality impact assessment will be completed during the development of the SOWG Strategy. The strategy is directly linked to a key Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) place-based objective of the Well-Being Board, which is to; *tackle the inequalities faced by women and girls, so they can thrive, and are free from violence, misogyny, harassment and discrimination at home, work, school or online.* Ensuring safety is key in achieving this objective.

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Portfolio:

Neighbourhoods and Community Safety.

Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Corporate

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides the Wellbeing Board with an overview of the issues relating to the Safety of Women & Girls in Bradford District.
- 1.2 It focuses on the national, regional, and local agenda, data, and good practice in response to SOWG and recognises the need to think holistically and differently across the 'system' by taking a 'systems thinking' approach to meet the challenge. This will involve engaging key stakeholders across our 'Place' to develop insights on how we operate and work as a Place for the benefit of women and girls and what can be done meaningfully to transform harmful cultural norms and practices and create a widespread early intervention and prevention response that will reduce violence against women and girls in the long term.
- 1.3 By addressing the issues collectively, we can work towards creating an environment where the safety of women and girls is a shared responsibility, contribute to the breakdown of barriers and create a culture that values and protects the well-being of all women and girls.
- 1.4 The SOWG strategy also aligns with the Well-Being Board's commitment towards gender equality, as highlighted by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) which range from women's political leadership to eliminating violence, trafficking, and discrimination. However, we recommend the focus of gender equality and empowering women and girls is reflected across all key programmes of work across our strategic partnerships.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Violence against women is first and foremost a violation of women's human rights.
- 2.2 The Government has recognised violence against women and girls as a national priority, and it has committed to a range of actions to protect women and girls from harm in strategies focused on tackling violence and domestic abuse (DA). The government has also introduced measures through legislation including the 2021 [Domestic Abuse Act](#).
- 2.3 The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) as: *any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.*
- 2.4 The United Nations identifies Domestic Abuse as: *abuse that is typically manifested as a pattern of abusive behaviour toward an intimate partner in a dating or family relationship, where the abuser exerts power and control over the victim. Domestic abuse can be mental, physical, economic, or sexual in nature.*

2.5 Life changing offences like rape, sexual assault, domestic abuse, stalking, harassment and so-called honour-based abuse disproportionately affect women and girls across West Yorkshire and in wider society nationally. It further disproportionately affects those from minoritized communities, for example, those with a disability or from a LGBTQ+ background.

2.6 The horrendous impact domestic abuse and sexual violence (DASV) has on victims, and their children led to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 now acknowledging all children as victims if they see, hear, or experience the effects of DA. Research has shown that children living in households where DA occurs have an increased risk of developing acute and long-term physical and emotional health problems and trauma, which may, without the right support, perpetuate the cycle of violence.

2.7

The prevalence of abuse



2.8 There has been an increasing awareness that tackling the violence, intimidation and fear experienced by women will require a significant new preventative, early intervention, education, and awareness approach. This will drive the ‘culture change’ required to ensure that attitudes and understandings shift so that current high levels of violence become drastically reduced.

2.9 In response to the SOWG national plan the government has:

- Raised the maximum penalties for stalking and harassment.
- Ended the automatic early release of violent and sexual offenders from prison.
- Introduced new orders for stalking, preventing sexual harm, and female genital mutilation to better protect victims and those at risk.
- Introduced a mandatory duty for frontline professionals to report cases of FGM in children to the police.
- Strengthened the tools available to frontline professionals - including putting in place a range of statutory guidance, training, and online resources.

- Supported ongoing research and data collection to understand the prevalence and nature of violence against women and girls.
- 2.10 The statutory [Relationships, Sex and Health Education](#) (RSHE) curriculum has been designed to comprehensively address crucial topics such as domestic abuse, consent, fostering healthy relationships, and educating pupils on effective bystander intervention strategies. However, we understand in Bradford District not all schools are utilising the commissioned service offer, and there is a need for additional support for educational settings to ensure that these issues are being addressed.
- 2.11 National campaigns and initiatives have been launched including Ask for Angela where potential victims can seek early support raising their concerns to trained staff within the night-time economy, additional nighttime economy projects include taxi marshals, the roll out of Active Bystander training, Street Angels, and the Walk Safe App.
- 2.12 The West Yorkshire Mayor has embedded SOWG as one of her 10 pledges and this is incorporated within the [Police and Crime Plan 2021-2024](#) and have launched the [West Yorkshire Safety of Women and Girls Strategy](#) which compliments the work of the West Yorkshire Police [Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy](#).
- 2.13 Update on the ongoing SOWG consultation:
- 2.13.1 A consultation with 70 women across Bradford District from a range of backgrounds in 2022 identified key findings and recommendations, these include:
- Existing support for women facing domestic abuse and sexual violence does not address the broader issues that women experience daily.
 - A significant need for more sessions where women from all faiths, backgrounds, and ethnicities can come together to share challenges and combat feelings of isolation.
 - A "Safety of Women and Girls" role should be established to work alongside key partners and enhance the response to women's concerns and needs (see below)
 - Further work on intersectionality, including additional consultation, research, and dissemination of findings, is necessary to identify specific areas of service delivery that require strengthening to combat violence against women and girls.
 - The "Ask for Angela" initiative should be expanded beyond bars and clubs to include other places where all women can access safety, such as nail bars and hair salons.
- 2.14 In August 2023, utilising the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), Bradford Council appointed a SOWG lead on a fixed term contract for 24 months. One of the key priorities of the SOWG Lead is to work with key partners and the public to develop a District-wide SOWG strategy. The strategy will be aligned with the WY Mayor's SOWG Strategy but will also include elements that are specific to the needs of the Bradford District

2.15 In collaboration with a Professor of Sociology and Criminology at Bradford University a baseline survey has been developed, to gather valuable insights into the needs of the Bradford District in relation to the safety of women and girls. The surveys were aimed at anyone aged over 18 years, who lived, worked, or studied within the Bradford District. The total number of responses received was 706.

- 49% of respondents witnessed women being harassed in public by men or groups of men in the last year, with varying frequency.
- 91% of respondents agree that the safety of women and girls should be a top priority for Bradford Council and its Partners.
- The four highest-rated priorities for the local Safety of Women and Girls (SOWG) partnership include **engaging with men and boys** to challenge attitudes, **working with communities to raise awareness** and prevent abuse and violence, **increasing the prosecution of perpetrators**, and **enhancing education and awareness**.
- 84.4% of respondents believe that ensuring the safety of women and girls is everyone's responsibility, but 35% of participants identified the need for additional support to understand their role, suggesting the need for comprehensive offer which includes information, legal guidance, safeguarding knowledge, and active bystander training.

2.16 Primary & secondary schools, colleges, and Youth Services are engaging in tailor made consultations that are aligned to the Ofsted Framework specifically to RSHE, and Citizenship to ensure the voices of children and young people is heard and embedded within our local strategy. To date we have received a total of 868 responses and the key findings and recommendations are:

Primary:

- Children expressed feeling unsafe in unfamiliar situations, around loud noises, or when they sensed a lack of care from friends, siblings, or trusted adults.
- They emphasised the importance of protecting and treating women and girls with kindness and respect, like men and boys, drawing examples from films and stories.

Secondary / Further Education/ Youth Service:

- Young girls cited feeling unsafe when out alone at night, on public transport, and online, often due to bullying and discrimination.
- Young girls mentioned being harassed at school and on public transport by their peers, which was often dismissed as banter to avoid embarrassment.
- Many believed that social media, gaming, films, and the music industry negatively influenced attitudes and behaviour toward women and girls but could also be used positively to promote equality and respect.
- Empathy was highlighted as a key tool for changing the behaviour of men and boys (e.g., What if it was your sister?), with an emphasis on illustrating healthy and unhealthy relationship dynamics.

- Many young people agreed that RSHE was important but suggested it might be more effective if delivered by specific teachers or external professionals.
- 2.17 To ensure we are capturing the voices of all communities, and individuals, specific engagement sessions are planned in community spaces and in different languages. In addition, we are currently recruiting 10 young ambassadors from across the district to engage a broader cohort of children and young people to support the SOWG agenda and to drive a district wide behaviour change campaign.
- 2.18 Current SOWG response**
- 2.18.1 The DASV Board Early Intervention & Prevention (EIP) Sub-group is coordinating a number of EIP projects and pilots which are providing positive outcome and outputs across the district, and these include:
- The EIP Perpetrator programme that utilises the ‘Navigator Model which focuses on intensive support for repeat domestic violence perpetrators, showcases significant reductions in domestic abuse offenses. In the last year 16 cases have been taken by the post holder onto full navigation:
 - 7 have been successfully discharged in the 8 months of delivery with **a 94.9% reduction in offending from all 16 participants.** (police verified data).
- 2.19 The training offer across the district has been broadened with bespoke training developed for housing providers, council wardens, housing contractors, children’s social care workers, and youth services, increasing understand and awareness across the district.
- 2.20 Localities pilots have started with Neighbourhood Services coordinating a local partnership response to DA&SV & SOWG in their prospective wards. Each ward is supporting the wider plan to:
- To engage in the ‘Active Bystander’, ‘Recognise and Respond’ and ‘Relationship Matters’ training sessions which are available for the community partnerships.
 - Engaging children and young people in healthy relationship workshops.
 - Supporting schools around Operation Encompass which is a Police-led initiative that following a DA incident where a child/ren were present a notification is sent to the school safeguarding lead to ensure information is shared with the school and that the ‘next Day’ is better for children.
 - Developing a Safe Spot in each ward.
 - Safe Spot and Cut it Out campaigns launched in businesses, community, and faith settings. Both initiatives aim to offer victims a safe and secure place for them to contact one of the many helplines available
 - Distribution of promotional materials, including contact cards; #NotOk.NeverOk posters.
 - Further extend and embed ‘Ask for Angela’ campaign across the district.
- 2.21 Bradford District is covered by a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) around the anti-social use of vehicles, managed by Bradford Council. The Order prohibits drivers from causing alarm, harassment, or distress whilst in their cars. Drivers seen engaging in verbally harassing persons on the street have received fines, under the

terms of the Protection Order.

- 2.22 Since February 2021, 18 PSPO operations have been carried out in the district. The Police have been working with the University of Bradford and the Council to increase our response to SOWG and further funding has been identified to support Police operations that challenge the harassment of women and girls from vehicles.

2.23 A mapping exercise has been undertaken identifying the RSHE offer in Bradford District and how schools are engaging with the commissioned services and the Pol-Ed programme. Schools who do not engage with the wider offer are being supported in doing so, and a primary school year 1 to year 6 RSHE module that aligns to the statutory guidance that focusses on addressing SOWG is being developed and will be offered across the district.

Next Steps

- 2.24 SOWG is everybody's business and to ensure effective change for Bradford District we are working with the place-based Strategic Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Lead to run a 'Systems Thinking' workshop in January 2024 which will identify a more joined up approach, identify gaps or key areas for focus and plan for long term systemic change.
- 2.25 The systems thinking approach will focus on a zoomed in look at the journey of women and girls in our Place and access to services whilst a zoomed outlook will focus on how well we are coordinated and connected, joint up in our response and maximising the resources we already have. Traditionally, we have taken a separate and siloed approach to women and girls i.e around safety. However, we now need to take a more intersectional and holistic approach, as one set of inequalities only impacts another.
- 2.26 To ensure a long-term effective response to reduce violence against women and girls, we need to engage with men and boys. The commissioned early intervention navigator pilot project evidenced the importance of holding perpetrators to account while using trauma-informed engagement as a successful tool for long-term change. In addition to our perpetrator programmes, we need to increase the education of men and boys and enable the education sector to feel empowered and confident to drive this forward.
- 2.27 The Community Safety Partnership Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence resources are currently aligned to our high-end acute response due to the need and demand across the district. These resources focus on managing the multi-agency risk assessment conferences that hear the most at-risk individuals of severe harm and death of DA and are supporting the coordination and implementation of our statutory Domestic Homicide Reviews. **We need a shift to increase our early intervention and prevention offers across the district across all systems** to ensure we can make the changes needed to increase the safety of women and girls in Bradford.
- 2.28 We plan to develop a cross system group that supports each partnership through their equality lens to contribute to SOWG in their respective work areas which will provide the golden thread response needed for Bradford, whilst linking directly with the

levelling up across place plan and working towards our sustainable development goals.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Each Partnership area to consider what 'culture change' would look like

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

- 4.1 The SOWG coordinator post is currently funded via the UKSPF funding until March 2025. During this time the SOWG Bradford Strategy will have been published and it is hoped that it will be embedded across the systems. There is currently no indication of any further funding aligned to SOWG for the district outside of 'Safer Bradford' (District Community Safety Partnership).

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

- 5.1 The SOWG strategy will report to the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Board governance arrangements. Further oversight will be offered by safer Bradford and district EDI structures.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

- 6.1 Aspects of the Community Safety Partnership Board's work is governed by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and associated guidance.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1.1 To drive the necessary change, there are clearly a range of initiatives and work that will need to be encompassed in mainstream provision across sectors, for example in Education and EDI.

7.2 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

- 7.2.1 No greenhouse gas emissions are apparent within the context of this report.

7.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.3.1 Implementation of the Community Safety Plan is expected to positively impact community safety across the district.

7.4 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

- 7.4.1 There are no Human Rights Act implications apparent.

7.5 TRADE UNION

7.5.1 There are no issues arising from this report.

7.6 WARD IMPLICATIONS

7.6.1 The safety of women and girls is everybody's responsibility, and even though certain ward areas will experience an increase in Police reports and crimes against women and girls, the SOWG strategy must be embedded within all the ward and locality plans across the district.

7.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

7.7.1 It is recognised that looked after children can be more vulnerable to specific crime types and appropriate Corporate Parent leads should be kept up to date with trends and concerns in relation to community safety via the Community Safety Partnership structure.

7.8 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

7.8.1 There are no trade union implications apparent.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

8.1 None

9

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 The Wellbeing Board is asked to support the Safety of Women Girls programme and individual Partnerships are asked to consider what actions can be taken to support the culture shift required to ensure the safety of Women and Girls across the District.

10.2 Further work will take place through the Wellbeing Executive and Partnerships to address any potential gaps in the response to the delivery of the SOWG strategy.

10.3 As part of the ongoing consultation process to form a SOWG strategy, the Wellbeing board considers and offers direction that will further support the development of the strategy.

11. APPENDICES

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

12.1

- Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy
<https://www.saferbradford.co.uk/media/jozhjrwi/bradford-dasv-strategy-21-24.pdf>
- WY Safety of Women and Girls Strategy
[West Yorkshire Safety of Women and Girls Strategy](#)
- Serious Violence Duty [Serious Violence Duty - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- Police and Crime plan [Police and Crime Plan 2021-2024](#)