

**Report to:** Safer Sefton Together

**Date of Meeting:** 8 September 2022

**Report of:** Simon Burnett Assistant Director Communities

**Subject:** Violence Against Women & Girls

**Author:** Steve Martlew Localities Service Manager

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## **1 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Safer Sefton Together (SST) on the responses from partners in relation to their work in combatting Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and to develop several strategic priorities for action over the coming year (s).

## **2 Violence Against Women Girls**

- 2.1 In July 2021 following the tragic death of Sarah Everard and others the government issued a strategy for tackling VAWG. This followed the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 which strengthened support for victims/survivors of DA and powers to bring perpetrators to justice.
- 2.2 In addition Emily Spurrell Merseyside Police & Crime Commissioner also made VAWG one of her key priorities and subsequently Merseyside Police developed a commitment to keeping women and girls safe in Merseyside
- 2.3 There is significant overlap with the work that is underway around Domestic Abuse (DA) and Sexual Violence (SV) and often the lines between the 2 subjects can become blurred. However its important that SST recognises that some VAWG doesn't fit within the Domestic Abuse definition but still needs addressing to keep women and girls safe.

## **3 Sefton Response**

- 3.1 At its meeting of the 17 March 2022 SST considered reports from all partners around their work in tackling VAWG. The reports provided assurance that all partners are fully cognisant of VAWG and are working hard to combat it. As outlined in 2.3 many of the responses leaned towards partner responses to both DA & SV but many of the barriers to reducing VAWG were often outside of this remit and are as follows:

### 3.2 Education

A very early intervention and prevention focussed solution suggest by several partners was a programme of education in partnership with schools:

- Education for Girls that violence towards them is not acceptable in any circumstance also covering issues such as consent and healthy relationships
- Education for Boys that VAWG is not acceptable in any circumstance also covering issues such as consent and healthy relationships
- Training for Teaching and support staff in spotting violence issues (sexual harassment, sexual violence and online sexual abuse) and delivering anti-misogyny training as well as such as consent and healthy relationships

### 3.3 Trauma Informed practice

All responses to VAWG should be victim-led and that further roll out of trauma informed training for front line practitioners and delivering intervention programmes such as ACES is critical.

### 3.4 Professional Curiosity

Several partners spoke of the low numbers of victims/survivors disclosing abuse or demonstrating disguised compliance. It is therefore that a culture of safe disclosure is created and frontline staff exercise robust professional curiosity where abuse is suspected.

### 3.5 Safe Routes Home

A key priority within the government strategy, the PCC's strategy and Merseyside Police action plan is to establish safe routes home from the night time economy. Suggestions around this subject are:

- Training for staff on public transport and taxi drivers to recognise signs of sexual harassment and violence
- Providing well-lit routes
- Providing an adequate and robust CCTV network

## 4. SST VAWG Statement

4.1 A suggested statement for SST around VAWG would be

*“Safer Sefton Together is committed to ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and is determined to ensure that Sefton is a place where women and girls are safe and feel safe to pursue their lives free from fear and*

*harassment. We believe that with effective earlier intervention, joint working and a drive to challenge the culture and attitudes that give rise to all forms of abuse, we can make Sefton a safe place for women and girls to live, work and enjoy their leisure time.”*

- 4.2 If SST members agree to the above statement and priorities we can develop an action plan that will feed into the Community Safety Strategy action plan.

## **5. Summary**

- 5.1 VAWG is an important part of the Community Safety Partnership Strategy and is at the core of the SST purpose. VAWG is also a key priority for government, the Merseyside PCC and Merseyside Police. The priorities have been developed following feedback from partners, in particular identified barriers to success.

## **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 SST are asked to

- Agree to the priorities for a VAWG action plan
- Agree the VAWG statement