

Thurrock Community Safety Partnership:

Making Thurrock Safer

A Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership



A STRATEGY TO TACKLE **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN** **AND GIRLS IN THURROCK** **2010- 2011**

<i>Lead Officer:</i>	Jim Nicolson, Community Protection Manager, TBC	
<i>Authors:</i>	Sheila Coates: South Essex Rape and Incest Crisis Centre (SERICC) Erika Jenkins: Women's Aid	
<i>Approval:</i>	VAWG TCSP Executive TCSP Board Childrens' Trust executive Safeguarding Adults Operational Board Stay Safe Group Overview & Scrutiny Committee	May 10 June 10 June 10
<i>For Planning Year:</i>	June 2010 –	
<i>Version Control</i>	Version 2.0 DRAFT 17 th June 2010	

www.shapingthurrock.org.uk/safer

Version 5.0

CONTENTS

	Page Number
1. BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION	3
2. PREVENTION	6
3. PROVISION	7
4. PROTECTION	8
5. CONCLUSION	9
6. ACTION PLAN	9

1. BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION

“Violence against women and girls can have a devastating effect on individuals and the communities in which they live. It ruins lives and, breaks apart families and has an impact across the generations”. The sentiments in this quote from the foreword to the national Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, launched in November 2009, applies as much to the communities of Thurrock as it does anywhere else in the country.

This Strategy sets out an overarching framework to enable all the relevant statutory and non-statutory agencies to provide a joined-up approach across the whole agenda of violence against women and girls (VAWG), linking, where appropriate, the responses to domestic violence with those addressing sexual violence and other cultural and traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and forced marriages.

There are a number of definitions of VAWG, the most widely used is that of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1993, which has been ratified by the UK and describes it as:

“Violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman, or that affects women disproportionately” and includes:

“...any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.”

The scale of violence against women and girls is alarming in the extreme;

- Nearly half of all women and girls in England and Wales report being victims of violence over their lifetime, whilst nearly one million women experience at least one incidence of domestic abuse each year (British Crime Survey (BCS) 2007/08)
- Nearly 10,000 women are sexually assaulted and 2,000 raped every week (BCS 2007/08)
- 34% of all rapes recorded by the police are committed against girls under 16 years of age
- An estimated 66,000 women and girls in England and Wales were subjected to genital mutilation in 2001
- In 2008 the Force Marriage Unit received over 1600 reports of suspected incidences of forced marriage
- At least 750,000 children witness domestic violence every year (Department of Health 2002)

In Thurrock much excellent work has been undertaken over twenty-five years to develop a range of services to meet the challenges of VAWG, which compares favourably with that seen anywhere else in the country. However, also as seen elsewhere, there is scope to improve further the linking-up of these services, including the engagement of relevant Council departments, to provide a seamless response to those affected by VAWG.

The purpose of this Strategy is to provide this improved linking-up by adopting the themes identified in the national strategy and to use them to drive activity locally to achieve the objectives in the supporting action plan, which will be refreshed on an annual basis. Whilst these include a number of new, or comparatively new, initiatives, the over-riding priority remains to make available the best possible service to those affected by VAWG, regardless of their socio-economic status, ethnicity or sexual orientation.

The body to coordinate this activity locally and deliver the action plan will be the recently launched Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Group (VAWGSG), which has a membership that includes all the key agencies involved locally in responding to VAWG, such as South Essex Rape and Incest Crisis Centre (SERICC) and Thurrock Women's Aid (TWA) who support women and girls who have experienced sexual violence; domestic violence; and sexual domestic violence. SERICC and TWA services are used by all women and girls from all ethnicities in Thurrock. The Strategy Group also includes representatives from the voluntary sector, including TRUST (The Thurrock Racial Unity Support Taskgroup). This body represents the interest of the local black and minority ethnic communities. The TVAWGSG replaces groups that previously were focused separately on domestic abuse and sexual violence, with only limited results.

The needs of men are also acknowledged and will be responded to within the context of the other responses highlighted in the Strategy. These include encouraging non-abusing men, who are in the vast majority, to take a stand against VAWG.

In terms of the scale of VAWG in Thurrock data collection is not always as robust as it could be and the VAWGSTG will be developing a performance monitoring framework to enable progress on its work to be evaluated.

Domestic Violence

Uncertainty about the proportion of offences that get reported to the police has been a concern when looking at these figures alone. The British Crime Survey found that in 2001/02 only 35% of domestic violence incidents were reported to police. By contrast, by 2008/09 this had risen to 47%.

Due to changes in the Home Office definition of violent crime, it is difficult to identify trends over the last few years and domestic violence is not separately flagged at national level. However, academics such as Sylvia Walby of Lancaster University reported in her report "The Cost of Domestic Violence; Up-Date 2009" suggest that "The best estimate is of a decline in the amount

of domestic violence at the same time as an increase in the use of the services of the criminal justice system.”

The number of domestic violence incidents reported to the police in Thurrock has been broadly static over the last two years, compared to a 2.7% increase throughout the rest of Essex. It equates to over 7 calls a day locally with the response coordinated by a specialist team of trained officers.

Police Domestic Violence Data

	Incidents				Detection rates (crimes)				Repeat Incidents %		
	2008/09	2009/10	% change		2008/09	2009/10	% change		2008/09	2009/10	% change
Essex	25054	25724	2.7%		64%	57%	-7%		43%	47%	4%
Thurrock	2676	2685	0.3%		65%	59%	-6%		42%	47%	5%

Sexual Abuse

Figures for those offences that are included in the category of sexual abuse can be equally as difficult to interpret in order to obtain an accurate picture of what is actually happening locally, to inform service provision. Police data shows that in 2009/10, there were 66 serious sexual offences and 95 sexual offences recorded. In the first three months of 2010/11, there figures were 30 and 17 respectively.

The main service provider for victims of these offences is the Thurrock-based South Essex Rape and Incest Crisis Centre (SERICC).

SERICC serves Basildon, Brentwood and Wickford as well as Thurrock, although half of their caseload (49%) originates from Thurrock. The chart overleaf indicates these demands over the last three years for Thurrock and for SERICC as a whole;

Demands for service from SERICC

Telephone help line & individual calls	Area	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
	Thurrock	2857	3092	4624
	Total:	5286	5973	9842
One to one counselling sessions	Area	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
	Thurrock	996	1215	1582
	Total:	1437	2054	2971
Advocacy / advice contacts	Area	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
	Thurrock	287	634	825
	Total:	484	833	1343
Individual services users (excluding non regular help line users)	Area	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
	Thurrock	138	158	183
	Total:	289	321	382
Telephone help line & individual calls	Area	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
	Thurrock	2857	3092	4624
	Total:	5286	5973	9842
One to one counselling sessions	Area	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
	Thurrock	996	1215	1582
	Total:	1437	2054	2971
Advocacy / advice contacts	Area	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
	Thurrock	287	634	825
	Total:	484	833	1343
Individual services users (excluding non regular help line users)	Area	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
	Thurrock	138	158	183
	Total:	289	321	382

SERICC Caseload

SERICC's latest report also shows the following breakdown of the type of offences they deal with which get reported to the police:

Adult Survivor of Child Sexual Abuse	41%
Rape	40%
Sexual Violence	15%
Domestic Sexual Violence	4%

National Strategy

The national Strategy divides the response to VAWG into three sections, which are adopted for the TPAWGS. These are:

PREVENTION – changing attitudes and preventing violence

(This includes awareness-raising campaigns; safeguarding and educating young people and vulnerable adults (including those with learning difficulties), early identification/intervention and training)

PROVISION – helping women and girls to continue with their lives

(This includes effective provision of services; advice and support; emergency and acute services; refuges and safe accommodation)

PROTECTION – delivering an effective criminal justice system

(This includes investigation; prosecution; victim support and protection; perpetrator programmes)

What's happening locally?

The next three Sections identify what is happening locally in regard to the activities identified in these Sections:

2. PREVENTION

Attitudes about VAWG can sometimes be deeply engrained and based on false or misleading information, which can sometimes be cultural. Research has shown that VAWG is still considered to be acceptable by a minority of people. This includes younger people, as revealed in an NSPCC survey in 2009, which indicated that:

13 to 15-year-olds were as likely to experience violence as the over-16's

One in three girls and one in six boys reported that they had experienced some form of sexual violence from partners.

Nearly 75% of girls reported that they had experienced some sort of emotional violence from partners.

To respond to this at national level awareness raising campaigns and development of a whole school response aimed at children and young people are undertaken. These initiatives will also be delivered locally. This includes the on-going support for the Violence Against Women Action Day on 25th November each year and developing further the links between those engaged in VAWG and children and young people's services, including the Children's Trust, as contained in the local prevention strategy.

Working with families is critical and the launch on 4th June, 2010 of the Family Interventions Programme will help target a coordinated response to meet the need of interventions to prevent criminality, including family violence.

Early identification of VAWG amongst those accessing treatment for drug and/or alcohol misuse is also crucial and will be addressed as a priority. This will be extended to include training of staff at the local Job Centre Plus staff.

Early identification by all statutory and voluntary sector frontline services will also be encouraged and supported to ensure that timely support, risk assessment and safety planning takes place.

3. PROVISION

The extensive consultation programme that was conducted as part of the national Strategy involved a significant number of Thurrock residents. The outcome revealed that what survivors wanted were services that:

- 1) Listens to them and believes them;
- 2) Treats them with dignity and respect;
- 3) Helps them be safe; and
- 4) Is accessible and available when women need support

Our objective will be to ensure every victim has a voice so that her views can be taken into account. Mechanisms will be put in place to ensure this can happen. Provision will include support to enable her to recover from violence; information to be able to make meaningful choices; and protection from a violent situation and redress through the criminal justice system.

A “ready reckoner” tool to calculate the need for local services has been released by the Home Office and will assist the development of a local needs assessment to evaluate the level of service currently in place.

Thurrock Women’s Aid provides a much-valued 15-bed refuge, for the benefit of women fleeing domestic violence. It additionally offers a floating support service, visiting women in their own homes, or if this is not possible at a safe location.

Workers provide advice and support on housing, welfare benefits, legal rights and a wide variety of other issues.

A weekly drop in service is provided at Women’s Aid and each month on a rotating basis, a solicitor, a homelessness officer from Thurrock Council and the Domestic Violence Liaison Officer from Essex Police are on hand to answer queries and to offer advice.

A women’s support group course, lasting 15 weeks is run twice a year is held twice a year and support is provided to children living in Thurrock who are suffering from the impact of witnessing domestic abuse.

SERICC provides a specialised service to woman and girls over 13 years old who have been raped, sexually assaulted, experienced child sexual abuse , sexual harassment, stalking or who have experienced any form of sexual violence or attempted sexual assault at any time in their lives.

SERICC also provides support to mothers whose children have been sexually assaulted and runs a weekly drop- in and a six weekly service user group (the SERICETTES)

SERICC services include:

- A confidential, free, independent telephone helpline
- 'One to one' long and short term sexual violence counselling
- Emotional support and advocacy
- Sexual health information
- Legal information – from Report to Court
- Accompaniment to court and medical appointments
- Support for a 'victim' and their family through a court case
- Signposting men and boys to appropriate services
- Housing and benefit advocacy

Both Women's Aid and SERICC also routinely face the challenges of meeting the needs of women with no recourse to public funds. Nationally, it is estimated that around 500 women present themselves each year seeking services; local front-line staff suspect the actual numbers to be far higher and growing. The scale of this issue is to be monitored as part of the Action Plan that supports this Strategy, whilst longer-term options are considered at national level.

4. PROTECTION

The national strategy highlights a range of specialist provision to meet the demands of VAWG-related issues. As outlined previously, all these elements are already in place, or will be shortly. These include:

Specialist Domestic Violence Court (SDVC)

This is a multi-agency approach to the specific safety and support needs of victims of domestic violence who are going through the criminal justice process. The police, prosecutors, court staff, probation service and specialist support services work together to ensure that victims are supported and kept informed throughout and that more offenders are brought to justice.

The Specialist Court reviews its work regularly via an Operations Group and reports to the Essex Criminal Justice Board, which has responsibility for the overall governance of the Domestic Violence Courts.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs)

MARACs bring local statutory and voluntary agencies together to protect those women at highest risk of serious injury or murder due to domestic

violence. The MARAC also manages high risk cases where there is repeat domestic violence.

In Thurrock, the number of cases that have been seen by the MARAC and then subsequently have a repeat appearance is closely monitored to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions agreed at the first appearance. In 2008/09, 18% of those cases dealt with by the MARAC were repeats; in 2009/10, this had dropped to only 12%. This compares with a national average of 21%.

Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs)

Part-supported by Home Office funding, these are trained specialists providing independent advocacy and support to high-risk victims. Currently, the post in Thurrock is not filled on a full-time basis, although this is being resolved to enable a full level of cover to be provided.

Essex Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs)

SARCs provide a one-stop service to victims of recent and historic rape and sexual assault. The service includes medical care including referrals to specialist sexual violence counselling and, if the victim wishes to support a criminal prosecution, forensic medical evidence can be gathered and support given throughout the criminal justice process. The first SARC to serve Thurrock will be opening in late summer 2010.

Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA)

SERICC has a one year Home Office part funded ISVA and a South West PCT funded full time ISVA. These are trained specialists providing independent advocacy and support to victims of sexual violence. These posts are vital to women and girls who wish to access the new Essex SARC.

Sanctuary Scheme

In addition to those services listed above, in Thurrock a Sanctuary Scheme is in place, now expanded to meet the need of private sector as well as Council tenants. Under this scheme, survivors' homes are given appropriate levels of security measures, following risk assessment, to enable them to remain in their homes with increased levels of safety.

5. CONCLUSION

As can be seen from the above, Thurrock has a range of specialist services that compares with that available anywhere else. Whilst these additional services are greatly valued, the priority remains to identify and meet the needs of survivors from all sections of the community in a coordinated and effective manner.

This Strategy will develop into a pathway that follows the direction of the national strategy in a way most appropriate to the needs of local communities.

Whilst it can be seen that much has been done, much remains to be done and the challenges of responding to VAWG are considerable. The re-vamped TVAWGSG will help coordinate responses from all those bodies already in place to maximise their effectiveness and success in meeting the needs of Thurrock residents.

6. ACTION PLAN

Set out overleaf is the first of the annual Action Plans to deliver the Strategy. These priorities were agreed by the TVAWGSG and will be developed into a details plan that drives activity and provides effective monitoring to demonstrate what real progress has been achieved.

James Nicolson
Community Protection Manager
jnicolson@thurrock.gov.uk
01375 652972

THURROCK VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS STRATEGY GROUP

ACTION PLAN 2010-2011

PREVENTION

	Priority	Actions	Owner	Resources	Outcomes
1	Awareness raising	1.1 Agenda item for next meeting to discuss November campaign 1.2 To take this Strategy to groups and raise awareness of issue 1.3 Identify other opportunities to raise awareness, including those with learning difficulties 1.4 Education of young people in particularly the vulnerable	All	Funding to be identified	Improved awareness and partnership working with OASIS, Age Concern, Alzheimer's, MIND, TOFFs Job Centre Plus etc
2	Female Genital Mutilation	2.1 Hold multi-agency workshops in October, 2010, to raise awareness amongst front-line staff in statutory and non-statutory agencies. 2.2 Mainstream lessons learnt into training	Sheila / Michelle	Apply for funding for venue and speaker	Reporting process identified and implemented. Agencies' responses more effective.
3.	Honour Based Violence	Review lessons from F&CO presentation on forced marriages. Identify, implement and review next steps, e.g. training front-line staff.	All		Effective and accurate response to all calls from those in danger

PROVISION

	Priority	Actions	Owner	Resources	Outcomes
4.	Ensure effective response to women from BME	4.1 Identification of most urgent relevant issues and agree the responses to them. 4.2 Production and circulation of a case study book with	All	Women from BME background, to support cultural	Staff awareness and response to needs of BME women

	background, to support cultural differences and those with no recourse to public funds	these results		differences and those with no recourse to public funds	improved
5.	Improve data gathering across agencies to inform need and to monitor progress against NI 32 (Repeat cases reported to MARAC) and NI 34 (Domestic Violence murders)	5.1 All agencies working with women to provide data for June meeting	All	Improve data gathering across agencies to inform need and monitor progress	Performance monitoring framework established to enable identification of project outcomes
6.	Olympics	6.1 Establish robust links with local police and their Olympics team in Essex 6.2 Check lessons from Toronto 6.3 Identify, implement and review at each TVAWGSG the actions required.	All	Not known at this stage	Adequate preparation to deter trafficking locally and effective response to any women in these circumstances

PROTECTION

	Priority	Actions	Owner	Resources	Outcomes
7	Understand links between perpetrators of DA to offenders of sexual violence.	7.1 Invite Laura Richards, head of homicide unit and offender profiles to speak to us regarding looking at intel and operationally how can interact with other agencies 7.2 Work with young offenders & victims of sexual violence	7.1 SERICC 7.2 James Waud (Head of YOS)	To be identified	Understand links between perpetrators of DA to offenders of sexual violence.

