

The Way Forward: Taking action to end violence against women and girls

Minutes

Violence Against Women and Girls Panel meeting-20 January 2010

Attendees

Kit Malthouse (KM)	GLA
Ken Chan (KC)	GLA
Gemma Townsend (GT)	GLA
Caroline Dawes (CD)	London Councils/London Safeguarding Children Board
Lynne Abrams (LA)	MPA
Nicola Speechly (NS)	GoL
Michael Robinson (MR)	GoL
Isabel Sutcliffe (IS)	LCJP
David Zinzan (DZ)	MPS
Jane Smith (JS)	TSA
Miriam Merkova (MM)	Toynbee Hall
Marai Larasi (ML)	Imkaan
Carlene Firmin (CF)	ROTA
Nicola Weller (NW)	Nia Project
Ron Belgrave (RB)	GLA
Susan Crisp (SC)	GLA
Yeliz Osman (YO)	GLA

1. Welcome and introduction

Deputy Mayor for Policing, Kit Malthouse (Chair of the VAWG Panel) welcomed everyone to City Hall and panel members introduced themselves.

2. The Mayor's commitment and progress so far

KM gave an overview of the Mayor's commitment around VAW and how this fits into overall strategic priority to make London a safer city for all Londoners.

3. The Way Forward Strategy and action plan

YO gave a brief overview of consultation responses followed by an update on latest changes to the strategy and action plan. YO also informed panel of deadline (22 January) for final changes before the documents go to print. VAW strategy, consultation report and action plan all to be published in March 2010.

The strategy and action plan challenge current silo based activity and to achieve a significant shift from reactive to preventative activity although the shift in attitudes is likely to take several years.

The action plan sets out specific actions, identifies priorities for the next year and the actions needed for London. Actions will change overtime but should be consistent with the over-arching strategy.

4. Discussion around panel priorities:

Panel members were invited to think about how the VAWG Panel can add value to work that is already taking place, rather than the Panel programme managing the whole action plan. KM raised concerns about the current significant increase in rape reports. Suggestions put forward by panel members:

- Activity around violent offenders, third party reporting
- Addressing attrition rates: significant amounts of work need to be done to improve the effectiveness of CJS systems and structures.
- Prevention: need health and education professionals on board, to pick up on issues, early identification
- Girls and gangs: there are masses of intelligence on male gang association-need to find ways of using this to find out who female associates are to enable us to start making interventions safely. Girls move from member to member and in between gangs. Islington is doing some work around this but still in its early stages. The Sapphire Team is doing some community outreach work and have set up drop in sessions to raise awareness and encourage women to report rape.
- Need to start sharing intelligence on rape offences across London.

KM suggested identifying 3 priorities for the panel, e.g. domestic violence, sexual violence and prostitution. Panel members had a discussion around what this would entail and how this could be undertaken so as not to duplicate existing work.

Concerns were raised about excluding harmful traditional practices (HTP). KM suggested kicking off with a small number of work-streams that are broader and then affect all women and then move onto more specific issues such as HTPs.

NS offered to map the Government VAW strategy delivery timetable and identify what more we can do for London. NS stressed that we need to get the two to marry and mesh as much as possible. It's very important we look at what is already being developed by Government e.g. the Stern Rape Review and a local dataset.

5. Outcomes and impact

SC pointed VAWG panel members to the indicative VAWG index at the back of the action plan. Some things can be counted e.g. no. of convictions and no of people going to the Havens but some things can't be measured so easily e.g. public perceptions so we have developed proxy indicators.

KM noted that there has been a 24% rise in rape this year. It is not clear whether this is due to an increase in confidence to report or an actual increase?

CF commented that with young women, it's not enough to improve perceptions of confidence-we need to ensure that when people come forward to report rape procedures and guidance are in place and local authorities can provide a good response when people do come forward e.g. LSCB safeguarding guidance.

An approach which considers quality of outcomes and provides an overview on progress is required. The government are also developing work on data and indicators and have published the "ready-reckoner".

6. Terms of Reference

T.O.R were agreed by all Panel members.

Panel membership was briefly discussed. LA informed the panel that Chair of the MPA Domestic and Sexual Violence Board, Valerie Brasse, will be MPA Member on the VAW Panel. SC noted that a health representative needed and this will be taken forward. A vice chair will be appointed when we have full membership.

Sub-committees

CD outlined how London Councils will work with the GLA to look at the delivery of objectives 1, 2 and 3 and will be mapping existing boards etc that could take on this activity. We need to mainstream these activities into agencies business plans. Once gaps have been identified, we will look at how the LSCB may be able to take on some of the actions and whether any new subgroups/working groups will need to be established.

We also need to look at how we lobby local authorities to ensure that they start funding VAWG activities. KM attends the London Leaders meetings and there is the possibility of raising this there. NS noted that LAAs are set until 2010-11. GoL want VAWG to be included in strategic assessments for future LAAs.

IS outlined how the LCJP will facilitate the delivery of actions under objectives 4 & 5. The LCJP has recently formed a Serious Sexual Offences Working Group. This group has just been established to undertake a time limited piece of work to look at rape conviction rates and attrition in London. Once this piece of work is complete, the LCJP will look at how they can work with this group to facilitate the delivery of broader VAW activities in action plan.

KM informed panel members of forthcoming VAWG events: ROTA launch of FVIV, HT network meeting and International Women's Day event arranged jointly between GoL and GLA.

7. Future meeting dates

Meetings to be held quarterly. Next meeting to be held in April. GLA will circulate dates for 2010.