

GREATER MANCHESTER POLICE FIRE AND CRIME PANEL

Date: 22nd July 2021

Subject: Greater Manchester Gender-Based Violence Strategy

Report of: Baroness Beverley Hughes, Deputy Mayor for Police, Crime, Criminal Justice and Fire and Dr Carolyn Wilkins Portfolio Lead Chief Executive for Police and Crime.

1. PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline to the Police and Crime Panel the development of the Greater Manchester Gender-Based Violence Strategy, and its progress towards approval by the Combined Authority and final publication.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Police and Crime Panel are asked to note the content of this report and agree to receive further reports on progress of delivery.

CONTACT OFFICER:

Neil Evans, Strategic Adviser to the Deputy Mayor, neil.evans@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk

Equalities Implications:

A full Equality Impact Assessment will be prepared and published with the finalised Gender-Based Violence Strategy.

Climate Change Impact Assessment and Mitigation Measures –

None identified.

Risk Management:

Detailed action plans will be developed from the strategy, which will all feature a risk management log.

BOLTON
BURY

MANCHESTER
OLDHAM

ROCHDALE
SALFORD

STOCKPORT
TAMESIDE

TRAFFORD
WIGAN

Legal Considerations:

None identified.

Financial Consequences – Revenue:

Costs have been incurred in respect of consultation and publication of the strategy, which have been met by the Deputy Mayor's Investment Fund.

The strategy makes broad commitments about developments of service provision, including commissioning arrangements. In financial terms such developments will be facilitated by existing funding envelopes. The strategy refers to potential innovations, which will be considered for funding from the Deputy Mayor's Investment Fund.

Financial Consequences – Capital:

None identified.

Number of attachments to the report:2

- Draft Greater Manchester Gender-Based Violence Strategy.
- Consultation Questionnaire.

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Timetabled to go before Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee on 7th September and Health Scrutiny Committee on 8th September.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The development of this strategy commenced in late 2018 and previous reports on progress have been presented to the Police and Crime Steering Group.
- 3.2 The length of time it has taken to develop the strategy demonstrates the complexities of the issues that must be tackled. In this period several drafts of a strategy have been prepared, which following dialogue with stakeholders led to further work being required.
- 3.3 The outbreak of COVID-19, as has been common across all sectors, meant that resources had to be diverted to deal with immediate and ongoing implications. In the context of gender-based violence this was particularly the case in maintaining and adapting services for victims and survivors of domestic abuse.
- 3.4 In October 2020 intense work was able to recommence. This work was supported and enhanced by a small team from the University of Manchester led by Professor David Gadd. This has meant that we have been informed by the

most up to date academic research and have been able to establish links nationally and internationally in respect of best-practice. For example, links have been established with academics and professionals in Western Australia, who are widely regarded as leading the way internationally in tackling aspects of gender-based violence.

3.5 The Mayor approved a draft strategy in March of this year.

4. STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

4.1 From the inception of this programme of work it has been the intention to design a strategy with appropriate engagement and input from stakeholders. This has included stakeholders within GMCA, other agencies and sectors, and in particular Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) organisations and those representing women and girls who have experienced violence.

4.2 Prior to October of last year such engagement had taken place with in excess of 40 agencies and organisations. This engagement ranged from one-to-one conversations to group round-table sessions.

4.3 Since October of last year, further engagement has taken place with a further 46 individuals representing stakeholder agencies and organisations.

4.4 In addition, there has been consultation with the Women and Girls Equality Panel and members of the Race Equality Panel. Consultation continues and has also led to more specific engagement with VAWG organisations, both large and small, with the Disabled People's Panel, Older People's Network and Youth Combined Authority.

5. THE DRAFT STRATEGY

5.1 Development of Original Published Draft

5.1.1 At the commencement of development, the working title of the work was 'Violence Against Women and Girls.' This was in recognition of the prevalence of gender-based abuse perpetrated against women and girls, with a recognition that the vast majority of perpetrators are men and boys. Despite the title, an explicit acknowledgement was made that recognised men and boys could also be subjected to such abuse.

5.1.2 During the development work it became clear that whatever the title, it would be contested. For any strategy to be successful, it must be able to engage men and boys. Specifically, it must recognise the prevalence of domestic abuse, the negative results this has for the development of children and the effects this can have on their characters and behaviour in adulthood. There was thus concern that the title would be exclusionary, in particular to boys. It is worthy of note that

the recently introduced Domestic Abuse Act now specifically includes the fact that children who are exposed to domestic abuse be specifically treated as victims. Previously this was only the case for the person who violence or abuse was specifically inflicted upon. In addition, members of the LGBTQ+ community are subjected to gender-based violence based on gender stereotypes and assumptions.

- 5.1.3 Taking this into account the title of the strategy was altered to ‘Gender Based Abuse.’ In ongoing engagement this title too was contested. It is clear that there is no consensus and thus to seek as much balance as possible the title of the initial draft strategy published was ‘Gender Based Abuse – Greater Manchester’s Strategy to Tackle Violence Against Women and Girls.’
- 5.1.4 Following the approval of the draft document by the Mayor, with purdah approaching it had been the intention to publish immediately after the mayoral election for formal public consultation. However, following the tragic abduction and murder of Sarah Everard, and the public reaction to it, the Mayor made the decision to publish early, the intention being to socialise the strategy with our communities and seek initial feedback. Publication took place on 17th March and responses were invited between then and 18th April.
- 5.1.5 The draft strategy consists of 8 key chapters namely:
- Tackling Gender-Based Violence (change of to violence described further below).
 - Changing the Story.
 - Mobilising Greater Manchester.
 - Supporting Victims and Survivors.
 - Meeting the Needs of Children and Young People.
 - Responding Effectively to Perpetrators.
 - Improving Policing and Criminal Justice.
 - Integrating Health and Social Care.
- 5.1.6 A series of commitments are made throughout the strategy underpinned by ten key priorities:
- Working to challenge the attitudes and underlying inequalities that foster gender-based violence, whilst mobilising the public, employers, health service, and educational institutions to work alongside the police and criminal justice system to protect victims and prevent violence and harassment.
 - Making it as easy as possible for victims and survivors to access the support and guidance they need, and providing high quality, joined up victim-focused services across health care, criminal justice, and other specialist providers.

- Ensuring all frontline staff understand both that anyone can become a victim of gender-based violence and that poverty economic insecurity, and other inequalities compound people's vulnerability to victimisation. These other inequalities arise from discrimination in response to sex, gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status, physical and intellectual abilities, and physical and mental health.
- Anticipating the threats posed to victims by online forms of abuse, while building on investment in new technologies to increase reporting, open up access to services, and provide evidence in criminal cases.
- Reducing the risk of homelessness that forces many victims and their children to ensure domestic abuse and increase the options for rehousing perpetrators to minimise the harm caused to victims.
- Develop a culture of reflective learning that builds on valuable work provided by specialist providers; enabling all frontline professionals to redress shortcomings in service provision at a system level and access the very best international research and evidence, so as to continuously develop best practice.
- Providing state of the art training and risk assessment tools for all those working with victims and perpetrators, which anticipate the diverse and complex needs of many service users.
- Working with employers, professional bodies and government inspectorates to set new professional standards for tackling gender-based violence and harassment, including responding to reports of it in the workplace, and by or against professionals working in the sector.
- Measuring the effectiveness of our interventions and public engagement campaigns, to ensure they increase safety for victims, change attitudes and behaviour, and reduce the prevalence of gender-based violence and the gendered inequalities underpinning it.
- Maximising accountability to victims and survivors, especially with regard to police and criminal justice outcomes; while working with the public, especially young people to tackle the norms, attitudes and inequalities that enable, justify and excuse gender-based violence; protecting those at risk of harm; and working effectively with those at risk of perpetrating it.

5.1.7 The strategy includes the commitment to establish a new Gender-based Violence Board with the core task of developing and overseeing the implementation of the strategic plan and establishing the key milestones to be achieved over the next ten years.

5.1.8 The Board will include victims and survivors with lived experience of gender-based violence as members. The Deputy Mayor will co-chair the Board with a survivor of gender-based violence appointed annually. The involvement and experience of women and girls with lived experience of violence will be central to how the strategy is delivered.

5.2 Initial Feedback

5.2.1 As indicated previously, the original draft was published on 17th March by the Mayor at his regular press conference. This was supplemented by a communication plan, where members of the public were encouraged to provide feedback via the GMCA website.

5.2.2 63 responses were received from individual members of the public, academics and organisations/groups representing particular interests. The themes from that feedback were:

- Continuing debate about the title, with conflicting views and no consensus.
- Some respondents objected what they saw as the centrality of policing and criminal justice within the strategy. Some objected to any reference to the police at all.
- Objection to the proposal for school engagement police officers.
- Greater focus required on the specific challenges faced by migrant women and those with no recourse to public funds.
- That the strategy should say more about the protection of sex workers.
- The strategy should say more about the specific challenges faced by trans people.
- Greater attention should be paid to the experiences of disabled people.
- Increased funding required for services supporting victims and survivors and the need to involve people with lived experience in policy making.
- Prevalence of sexual harassment within public spaces and priority required to tackle this.
- Housing and homelessness.
- The need to set out how the strategy would be measured and success defined.

5.3 Amended Draft

5.3.1 Following consideration of this feedback, the following amendments were made to the strategy:

- Title changed to 'Gender-Based Violence Strategy.' This title has been settled on as it is widely used nationally and internationally, and underpinned by international conventions. Further, the accompanying international definition fits with the issues that we seek to tackle.

- A commitment has been added to work with organisations that are experts on and work with ethnic minority communities, to improve assessment procedures in respect of rehousing so that social, emotional and economic needs are considered, as well as the potential risk of hate crimes.
- A commitment to collect data on gender-based violence and local demand for services to meet the needs of all communities and demographic groups.
- Links to be established across local authority areas for the provision of housing, care and support for survivors of domestic abuse through a Greater Manchester Housing Reciprocal.
- Commitment to Violence Against Women and Girls Sector Shared Core Standards in respect of commissioned services and development of Greater Manchester Advocacy Framework.
- Commitment to development and support of teachers to ensure best practice is shared and celebrated.

5.3.2 These amendments are reflected in the draft that is currently published to facilitate the formal public consultation.

5.3.3 Submissions received in the initial feedback phase have been retained and will continue to be considered alongside responses received during formal consultation.

6. FORMAL PUBLIC CONSULTATION

6.1 The formal public consultation phase was launched on 22nd June at the Mayor's press conference and closes on 1st August.

6.2 The consultation consists of an on-line questionnaire on GM Consult, where a copy of the draft strategy and supporting documents, including easy read versions are available.

6.3 The questionnaire seeks views on the title of the strategy and accompanying definition, the priorities defined in each chapter, as well as providing opportunity for free text responses.

6.4 The on-line consultation is complemented by the following:

- One to one interviews with victims/survivors of sexual violence.
- One to one interviews with victims/survivors of domestic abuse.
- One to one interviews with victims/survivors of domestic abuse from minority ethnic communities.
- Focus group – Female students.
- Focus group – Women between ages 18-30.
- Focus group – Women over 54.
- Focus group – Men between ages 18-30.
- Focus groups x 4 – School students (boys and girls).
- Focus group – Women with disabilities.
- Focus group – Employers.
- Focus group – Police and probation officers.
- Summit (in conjunction with Violence Reduction Unit) – School head teachers.

6.5 At the conclusion of this round of consultation the responses will be considered and further amendments made, where judged appropriate.

7. GOVERNANCE

7.1 As outlined previously, a Gender-Based Violence Board will be established with the responsibility for the delivery of the strategy. Work to identify and appoint members to the Board is underway.

7.2 Given that the strategy is envisaged to have a lifespan of ten years, an early task of the Board will be to set out the initial priorities in a delivery plan for the first year.

7.3 In addition, the Board will identify key milestones and define the measurements and key indicators that will support their achievement. As outlined previously, in the initial public feedback some respondents stated that these should be defined in the strategy. This is understandable, however, given the stated ambition to increase accountability to victims and survivors, including their involvement and that of organisations who represent and support them in the governance process, it is important they are involved at the outset in setting the priorities and influencing the ways in which success is judged. This will be made explicit in the final strategy document and the priorities and measures of success will be published publicly.

8. PUBLICATION

8.1 It is envisaged that the finalised strategy will go before the Combined Authority on 24th September, with publication following immediately thereafter, subject to approval.