



Improvement

Customer led transformation programme

Case study – London Borough of Lambeth

Violence Against Women and Girls

32/58

Contents

About Lambeth	3
Background	5
Objective	6
Approach	6
Findings	13
Outcomes	17
Benefits	21
Governance	24
Resourcing	25
Challenges and lessons learnt	26
Next steps	27

The Customer Led Transformation Programme

Lambeth's work has been funded under the Customer Led Transformation programme. The fund aims to embed the use of Customer Insight and Social Media tools and techniques as strategic management capabilities across the public sector family in order to support Place-Based working.

The Customer Led Transformation programme is overseen by the Local Government Delivery Council (supported by the Local Government Association).

The fund was established specifically to support collaborative working between local authorities and their partners focused on using customer insight and social media tools and techniques to improve service outcomes. These approaches offer public services bodies the opportunity to engage customers and gather insight into their preferences and needs, and thereby provide the evidence and intelligence needed to redesign services to be more targeted, effective and efficient.

About Lambeth

Lambeth is the second largest borough in London and is one of the most densely populated in the UK, with a transient and growing population estimated to be around 238,300. The population is extremely diverse with around 38 per cent from BME communities, and the second highest percentage of Black Caribbean residents (12 per cent) of all local authorities.

Around half of the population are aged between 20-44, a young age profile in comparison to other London boroughs and the rest of the UK. Lambeth also has a relatively large Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) community. Although there are no exact figures, local surveys estimate the community to be around 3-5 per cent of the population.

Lambeth has a mixture of affluent and deprived areas. The 2007 Multiple Deprivation Index (MDI) shows Lambeth to be the fifth most deprived borough in London and 19th in England. Over half of Lambeth residents live in areas that are amongst the 20 per cent most deprived in England, and the borough is above the regional and national average for the number of 15-19 year olds living in the most deprived areas.

The health of Lambeth residents is amongst the poorest of local authorities in the country, ranking fourth for unhealthy lifestyles with high levels of alcohol and drug misuse. Lambeth also has the eighth highest local authority population with mental health needs.

Between 2001 and 2009 the Total number of Notifiable Offences (TNOs) fell in Lambeth and crime is now 30 per cent less than in 2000. Over 2009/10 crime remained at the same level, with a 0.6 per cent increase (London as a whole decreased by 1.9 per cent). Lambeth remains one of the highest boroughs in London for recorded crime, particularly for serious crimes including serious violence, gun crime, robbery and knife crime.

Violence against women is a significant issue in Lambeth. The national domestic violence helpline reports that the number of calls received from women in Lambeth is the highest of all London local authorities. The Violence Indicator Profiles for the English regions show Lambeth ranked 329 out of 354 local authorities in recorded sexual offences (the higher the ranking the greater the number of offences).



Background

Prevalence of VAWG in Lambeth

Lambeth ranks as the highest volume borough in the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) for reported Most Serious Violence against Women, and has the fifth highest volume of reported domestic violence offences out of the fifteen boroughs that are most similar.¹ Data from the National Domestic Violence helpline shows that for the period of April-October 2011, 431 calls were made from Lambeth residents. This was the highest amount of calls from all London local authorities (5.7 per cent). Based on an analysis of offences of domestic violence reported to Lambeth Police between January 2011 and December 2011², there were 1683 Domestic Violence Offences in Lambeth, compared to 1733 in 2010. This shows a slight decrease in the level of offences of 2.9 per cent (50 offences).

In comparison to regional and national averages, Lambeth has a high number of sexual offences; the Violence Indicator Profiles for the English Regions (VIPER) ranks the borough as 319 out of 326 authorities in the country (326 being the highest for sexual offences), and the fourth highest in London. However, total sexual offences in Lambeth for 2011 were at their lowest level since 2008, with 519 offences. Of these, 82.6 per cent were classed as serious sexual offences. All sexual offence categories saw a decrease compared to 2010.

¹ Safer Lambeth's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2011-14, 2011

² Lambeth Borough Domestic Offences-01/01/11 to 31/12/2011, Lambeth Borough Police

Whilst there are no specific figures on the extent of prostitution, Lambeth is believed to have the largest on-street sex market in South London, with 20 to 30 sites identified where soliciting for the purpose of selling sex takes place. A 2004 study by Trust highlighted that over 80 per cent of women involved in prostitution in Lambeth experienced physical or sexual abuse. This was re-enforced with a dip sample study in 2011 which showed that 72 per cent of women who were being supported by Trust had experienced domestic and/or sexual violence.

Over 2009/2010 it was estimated that around 11,395 women and girls in Lambeth had been stalked³. From January 2010 to December 2010, there were 1,744 harassment cases (male and female victim-survivors) recorded by the police.⁴

The strategic approach to VAWG in Lambeth

The Safer Lambeth Partnership has been developing and driving the delivery of a Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy as part of the response to the former government's strategy Together we can end violence against women and girls (2009), the Mayor of London's strategy, 'The way forward: taking action to end violence against women and girls (2010) and the HM Government 'Call to End Violence against Women and Girls' published in November 2010.

Lambeth delivers a range of services across the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) agenda however, prior to this project only two service areas had clearly defined strategies – domestic violence and prostitution. In response to this Lambeth Council and its partners held a VAWG summit and carried out a pilot research project in 2010 focusing on the wider VAWG agenda. This research, based on interviews with statutory and voluntary agencies, allowed the Council to build a more accurate evidence base in relation to the scale of VAWG in the borough, to identify gaps in service provision and to highlight good-practice.

The research recommended that the Council create an overarching VAWG strategy, with the aim of better coordinating services providing support to women affected by VAWG, including domestic violence, sexual violence, forced marriage, prostitution, trafficking, stalking, female genital mutilation, and so-called honour-based violence – giving women easier access to the practical and emotional support that they need. The research in early 2010 also recommended the development of a partnership delivery response to these forms of violence.

The Customer Insight project was commissioned to inform and support this development of the VAWG Strategy. Using multiple methodologies, the Customer Insight (CI) Project gathered quantitative and qualitative data to provide a clearer understanding of service-user experiences and expectations. The research included work tracking the journey of female victims of violence through existing services (see 'Approach').

³ This is an estimate from the Home Office's VAWG Ready Reckoner

⁴ Seen from the Other Side - Service Users Views on Lambeth Services - Lambeth Violence Against Women and Girls Customer Insight Project, 2011

Objective

In the light of these ambitions, the Customer Insight Project was commissioned in September 2010 to:

- inform the development of the VAWG strategy
- gather the views of women and other agencies on how best to meet the needs of women experiencing VAWG
- identify opportunities to streamline referral and support pathways between service providers
- support the re-commissioning of a Lambeth VAWG service model.

By reducing the duplication of service user contacts and assets, the project has helped achieve efficiency gains which have enabled the Council to increase the capacity of the service to better meet demand. The insight work has also helped the Borough to make the business case for further funding (see 'Outcomes').

Approach

The project involved trying a number of options for engaging with women and different innovative methods of gathering customer insight, so that a fully informed strategy could be produced for going forward. In order to better understand the women in the borough who are experiencing violence, evidence was sought of the differences and similarities between their experiences, and efforts made to identify what they wanted and needed from the services available.

In order to access as wide a range of service users as possible the researchers adopted a multi-methodological approach, using innovative techniques to engage women in the process, as well as gathering and analysing both quantitative and qualitative data from a wide variety of sources to

provide evidence relating to each of the areas identified above. Gathering information in a variety of ways also increased the reliability and validity of the findings.

The project used the following information gathering techniques:

- one to one interviews
- focus groups
- world cafés (See text box)
- postcards.

The project also used the following engagement techniques including:

- giving informal presentations at gatherings of both service providers and service users to publicise the various events
- piggy-backing onto existing activities/meetings where women were gathered together
- hosting specific activities to attract attendance (see below for more details)
- interpreters and childcare provision was provided throughout to facilitate participation.

World Café

The world café methodology was 'discovered' and formalised by Juanita Brown and David Issacs in 1995. The objective is to create an environment in which conversations around important questions can take place in a relaxed environment. The format enables people to think together and intentionally create new, shared meaning and develop collective insight into the issues that they consider important.

This methodology is useful for gathering qualitative data from a large group in one session and the café style encourages free-flowing conversations to occur.

Focus groups

Between November 2010 and February 2011, the project organised 10 focus groups, attended by 56 women in total. From the focus groups the project aimed to:

- better understand women's experience of VAWG, and the context in which abuse/violence occurs
- examine women's experience of identifying accessing appropriate services
- explore women's survival strategies for coping with the impact of VAWG.

The focus groups recruited women from a number of Lambeth wards including:

- Coldharbour – due to high reporting rates of sexual violence
- St Leonards – due to the high reporting rates of domestic violence
- Brixton Hill – because of the visibility of street prostitution
- Princess – due to the high rate of sexual violence.

Recruiting for the focus groups proved to be challenging (see 'Challenges and lessons learnt').

Each focus group lasted 2 1/2 hours, and was broadly structured around the questions outlined in the 'Topic guide for service user focus groups' available from the Knowledge Hub.

- experiences of VAWG
- use of health and general services
- VAWG awareness and sources of information/knowledge
- experiences of accessing and using services, and multiple service use
- future use and impact of the visit
- reasons for not accessing services

- views on joint working and information sharing
- ideas on improving and promoting services.

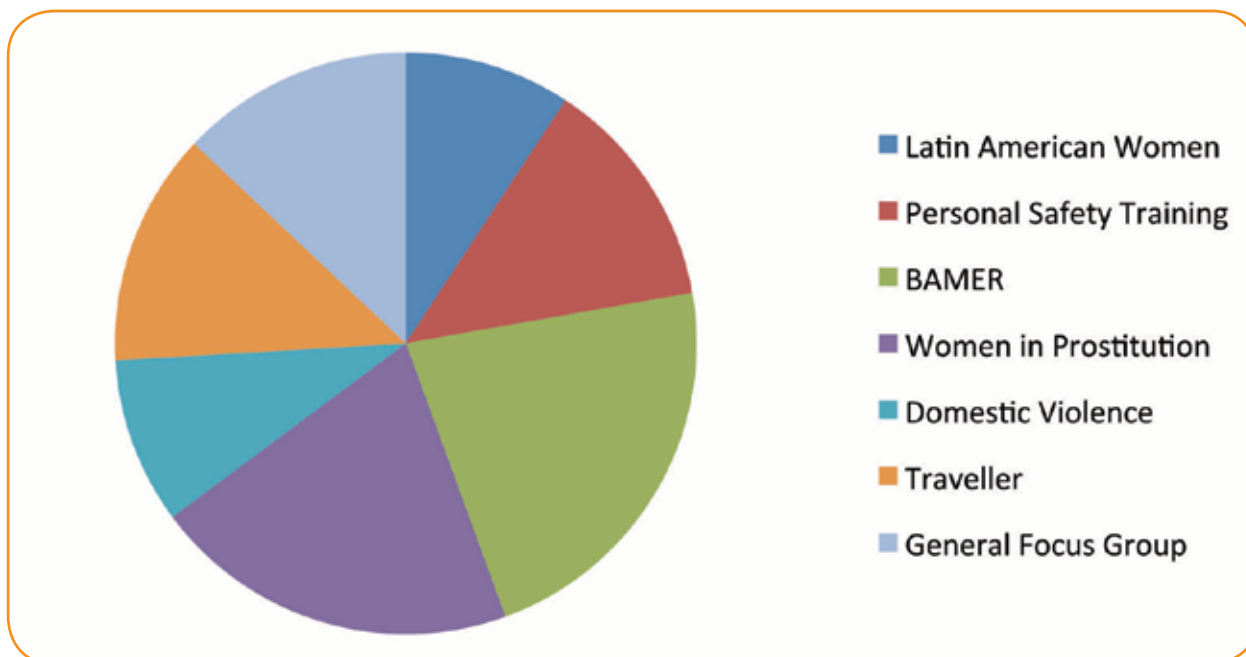
The groups provided a safe space in which women could speak to others in a confidential and respectful setting which allowed them to share experiences and give (and also receive) peer support. Everyone who participated signed confidentiality agreements. A copy of the Confidentiality Agreement is available from the LGA Knowledge Hub.

The project recruited women who were already in touch with a service, whether or not this was related to their experience of VAWG. This provided a degree of back-up and follow on support to those women who had negative memories triggered by their participation in the consultation. Both researchers also made themselves available to any participants who needed to talk following the consultation and ensured that they were linked into specialist services should they need ongoing support. This resulted in an investment of considerable additional time, but was crucial to ensure the efficacy of the project.

Furthermore, participants received a gift of a high-street shopping voucher to demonstrate the project's appreciation for their time and effort. The project made it clear to participants that their contribution was an essential part of the research and that their views would be fed directly back to Lambeth Borough Council and into the development of the VAWG service model.

The charts below show the background of the women who participated in the focus groups, based on the information that they gave(not all participants were willing to complete the forms).

Figure 1. Background of the women who participated in the focus groups

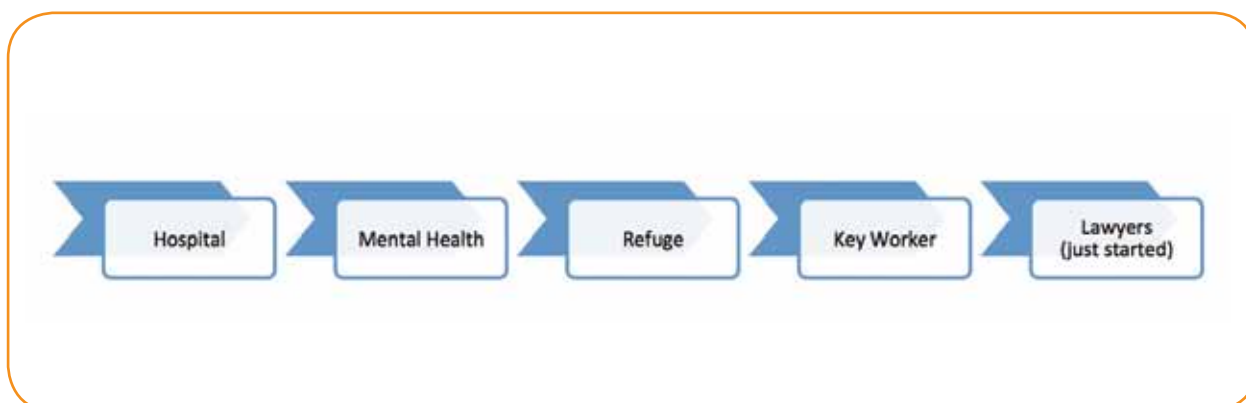


With the permission of the participants, the focus groups were recorded. The resulting audio files were stored on an encrypted database and subsequently transcribed. Any specific identifying information – such as names or locations – was anonymised.

Customer journey mapping

Twenty-one of the women who participated in the focus groups also completed a customer journey map. The objective of the mapping was to gain a detailed understanding of women’s help seeking processes, including the order in which they approached services and whether each contact resulted in a positive or negative experience. An example of one of the journey maps generated by a workshop participant outlining the sequence of service providers they had sought help from is included below.

Figure 2. Customer journey map



As part of the mapping exercise, participants provided details of the agencies they had contacted, the referrals made between agencies, the appropriateness of the agency response, and their overall views of the experience.

The content generated by the customer journey mapping – alongside all the input from the focus groups, interviews and other exercises – was analysed and the themes arising are summarised under ‘Findings’.

World Café events

The project held two World Café’s as part of the research process: one for service users, and another for service providers.

Each table had a facilitator to guide the discussions, pens, crayons and paper were provided to enable participants to take notes and draw. After each round of conversations the attendees moved tables to facilitate networking and the cross-referencing of conversations.

To enable women with children to attend a crèche was also provided free of charge. A high number of women did not speak English, and therefore interpreters were present for the World Café. Literacy was also an issue for some attendees and it was the role of the facilitator to capture their views in a respectful manner.

Service users

The service user World Café was attended by 32 women, and comprised three rounds of conversation of 30 min each, centred on the following questions:

- Imagine back when you were experiencing your abuse and imagine you had a supportive best friend or family member. What would you want / not want them to say or do and why?

- If you were in charge of improving services to women and girls in Lambeth, what would key messages would you most want service providers to hear? Are the messages the same for all agencies or are there some for specific agencies?
- Imagine that we lived in a world where everyone was determined to end VAWG. What would be different?

Following the three rounds of conversation the researchers then facilitated a plenary session in order to allow each of the participants to hear feedback from each of the table conversation, and share their thoughts on the day, and any key messages.

Service providers

The World Café for service providers was attended by 28 participants discussed the following questions:

- What can you/your agency contribute towards monitoring and evaluating the impact of Lambeth VAWG strategy? What would success look like? What indicators should there be?
- What would an effective VAWG communications strategy look like? Who would be the target audiences? What might the key messages be?
- What responsibility can your agency take regarding women with chaotic / complex lives?

In-depth interviewing

The project also interviewed four women who were either unable to attend one of the events or who did not feel sufficiently confident to speak about their experiences in a group setting. One interviewee had experienced honour-based violence; two had experienced rape and sexual assault; and one was living in a domestic violence relationship. Three of the women were white and UK-born, and one from the Indian sub-continent.

The interviews took place in a drop-in centre in the borough and took between 30 minutes and one hour. Support was available at the centre for the interviewees before, during and after the interview.

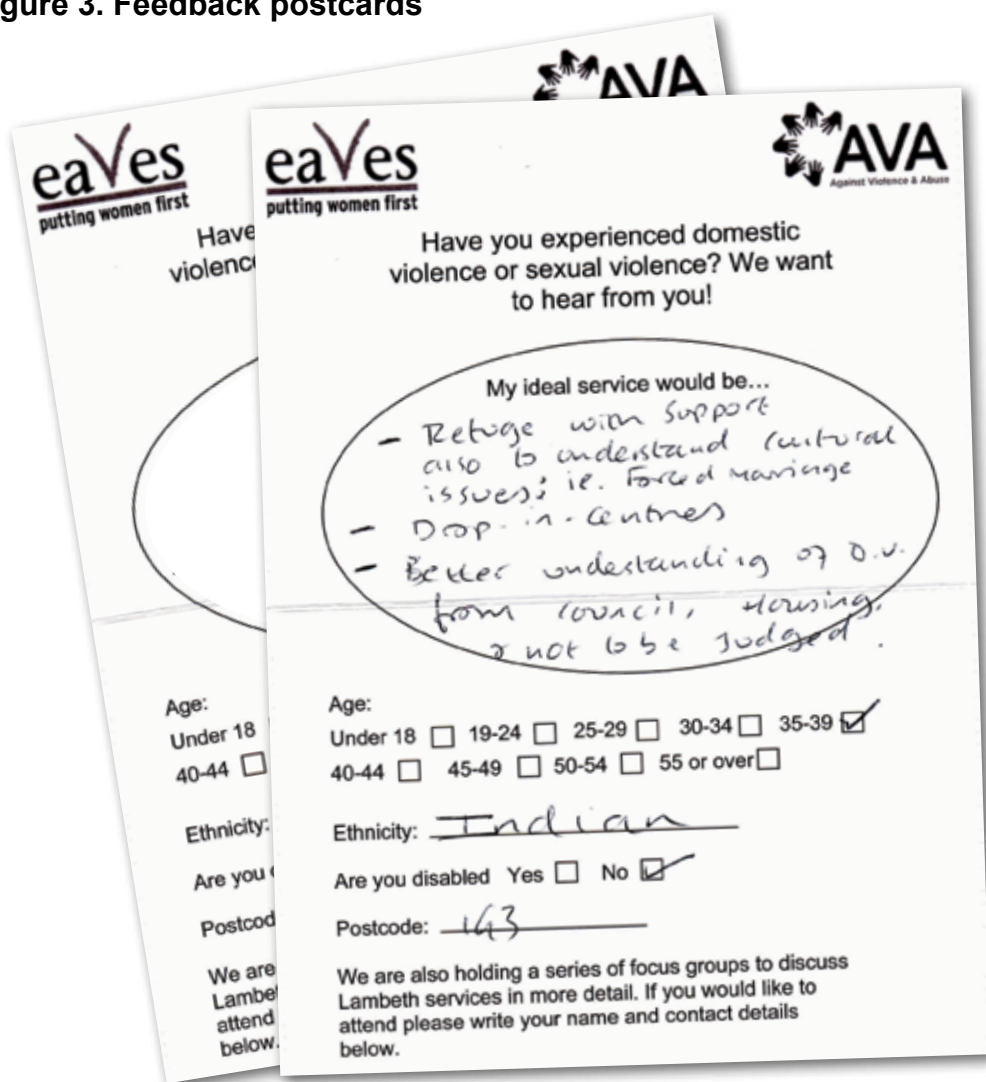
Questions asked during the interview were taken from the 'Topic Guide for Service User Focus Groups' available from the Knowledge Hub.

Distributing postcards

One thousand pre-printed and pre-paid postcards were distributed around the borough inviting women to complete the sentence: 'My ideal VAWG service would be...'

The project hoped that this method would generate responses from women who did not want to or who were unable to attend a consultation event. It was also hoped that women who may not currently be engaged in services would share their views of how / what they would like to be delivered in the future. However, the number of returns was very low. The project put this down to a lack of time and resources to publicise the initiative fully.

Figure 3. Feedback postcards



Surveying the community

The customer journey mapping clearly showed that most victim-survivors seek help in the first instance from a friend or relative. To gauge the knowledge of both this source of support and to access feedback from women who had not engaged with VAWG services in Lambeth, a community survey was conducted in the following areas of the borough: Stockwell, Vauxhall, Oval, Brixton, Loughborough Junction, and Tulse Hill, including the following postcode areas: SW2, SW8, and SW9.

The researchers accessed adult women whom were either with another female or alone, introduced themselves and the project, and asked if they would consent to answering questions and giving their opinion of issues relating to VAWG.

Each contact took between five and fifteen minutes each. In total, 77 women provided information. The survey asked 77 women two questions:

- Are you aware of any services locally which you could use if you were experiencing domestic or sexual violence?
- Do you personally know anyone - a friend or family member - who has experienced sexual or domestic violence?

The questions were refined as the research progressed. Based on feedback from the first 54 respondents, the last 23 respondents were also asked: How many UK women do you think are affected by sexual or domestic violence?

Recruiting participants

The project was aware that conducting research into VAWG presented challenges. VAWG is still a largely a hidden, sometimes stigmatised and sensitive issue. Obtaining reliable data on VAWG is a difficult and complex task, mainly due to limited recording practices, chronic under reporting and the private context in which much of this violence takes place. Furthermore, the project wished to engage women who would not usually participate in consultation - and deployed a number of innovative techniques to do so.

A number of women were directly recruited through specialist VAWG and community groups such as the Eaves Scarlet Centre; Solace Women's Aid, Asha, Lambeth Women's Project and the Gaia Centre. These groups work with some of the most disadvantaged and marginalised women, and also had existing social events which the researchers were able to attend in order to make a short, informal presentation about the research and to invite individuals to attend the focus groups or the World Café.

Activities which were deployed to attract attendees included:

- hosting a film viewing followed by a group discussion
- assertiveness and role-play sessions
- art workshops
- creative writing
- personal safety awareness training.

It is noteworthy that some of the women who engaged with the CI Project attended 4-5 of these presentations before deciding to attend a consultation event, indicating high levels of scepticism and distrust amongst some groups of women. Paradoxically, it is this group of disengaged women who are the most financially costly to public services because little effort is made to get to the root cause of their continual service usage.

To ensure that any woman who wanted to could attend one of the events, the research team put into place a number of measures. These included providing childcare, interpreters, reimbursing travel expenses and holding events in fully accessible venues.

Without exception, the service users consulted during this research project welcomed the opportunity to input into the developments of VAWG services. Their experiences, opinions and words form the basis of this report and in particular, the recommendations for services.

VAWG summit

On 31 March 2011 – at the conclusion of the project – a successful VAWG conference was held with key speakers from the Home Office, NHS Violence Against Women and Girls Taskforce and AVA and Eaves (the agencies who undertook the customer insight project on behalf of Lambeth).

The conference was open to professionals who work with women in Lambeth and provided an opportunity to learn more about the national VAWG policy context, the findings from the Customer Insight project and importantly how these findings would inform the key priorities for the Safer Lambeth VAWG strategy. The conference was attended by 100+ delegates from across statutory, community and voluntary sector services in Lambeth.

Feedback from delegates highlighted that the presentation that was most useful and of most interest was the presentation delivered on the feedback, findings and recommendations

VAWG summit



from the Customer Insight project by AVA and Eaves. This included an interview with a victim survivor of VAWG who had participated in the insight project. Having a survivor present their experience of VAWG directly proved to be a very effective way of communicating the impact of VAWG, and the changes to the local public sector needed to implement to improve outcomes in the future.

In addition to the program, Lambeth Borough was awarded the 'White Ribbon Status' for their exceptional multi agency work across the borough in the field of Domestic Violence. Councillor Rachel Heywood, Cabinet Member for Communities and Community Safety, was presented the certificate by executive director Chris Green of the White Ribbon Campaign (see photo below). The White Ribbon Campaign (WRC) is the UK branch of the global campaign to ensure men take more responsibility for reducing the level of violence against women.

VAWG summit



Findings

The project generated substantial insight into the experience of women who are victim-survivors of this abuse – how they view services and what they want to see in the future.

Specialist VAWG services are highly valued by women who have experienced violence, and there was a high level of support for co-located VAWG service provision.

- pro-active contact (ie where service providers initiate contact rather than waiting for survivors to do this) helps them to feel cared for and supported, and thus remain engaged with services.
- a full needs assessment on first contact is perceived as useful so long as full information is given as to why the questions are being asked, who will see the answers and the limits of confidentiality.

“It doesn’t have to come to that stage, if they just gave you the initial help when you need it, when you knock on the door then that stage doesn’t have to come”
Service user, Focus Group participant

Most women said they disclosed details of their abuse to a friend or family member in the first instance. Therefore the response of friends and family is critical in determining subsequent success of help-seeking.

- One issue is the level of knowledge about existing specialist VAWG service provision was low for women who had not experienced violence, meaning that families and friends may not yet be in a position to provide the best advice at the point of disclosure. This can lead to women finding out about what help is available by chance.
- In some instances this is because women are not naming their experience as abuse, but also because of a low level of awareness of service provision.

“I wish I had known where to go. I told my best friend but she had never heard of anyone who helps girls in my situation. In the end I got help from my GP, but that was by pure chance.”

18-year-old Asian woman escaping forced marriage in Focus Group 6

Access to services was often affected by a lack of available childcare, and then compounded by long waiting times. This was particularly true in relation to the availability and accessibility of counselling services.

“The doctor told me it would take about six weeks to get me an appointment with the counsellor, and I thought, to hell with that. I’ll either be dead or happier by then. I decided to do it on my own.”

Reporting to the police was generally a positive experience for women who have experienced domestic violence or a sexual violence offence. However, women indicated that improvements were needed for other forms of VAWG, and that this could be supported by more relationship building, through outreach and presentations, with certain communities by the police.

Women indicated that they use services across borough boundaries. This is because women frequently live, work and socialise across boroughs and therefore use services in all of them. This is exacerbated for women who have had to move home as a consequence of the abuse. Therefore, one negative experience with a service in another borough acts as a deterrent for approaching that service in Lambeth, and this was particularly relevant for the Police.

A common theme, and of concern, was that women saw the potential for Children’s Social Care involvement as a key barrier to accessing help. Women often felt that social workers were not always supportive of them, and that they were often held accountable for the violent behaviour, as opposed to their abusive partner who was perpetrating the violence.

Women indicated that they are as concerned as to how a service is delivered as they are about what is delivered. Women’s views on other services ie non-VAWG specialist services, was mainly neutral although in general women felt processed as a ‘case’ rather than supported and cared for.

“The [female police officer] was really good, very supportive. She was supportive because she was willing to listen and provided advice.”

Service User Feedback, Focus Group 4

Women also felt that terminology and jargon used by professionals, in particular statutory agencies, can often be off-putting and alienating.

“A lot of services can’t handle what I told them and the experiences I had had [ie suicidal feelings].”

Another strong theme was that peer support is very highly valued. Women like services which have a social and peer-led element – they highlighted that rebuilding their lives post-VAWG is hard, takes a long time and is frequently lonely. The availability of support from somebody who has experienced something similar is valued immensely.

“We need to be linked with like-minded people with the same experience. Then we would have better trust in dealing with them. A network would be great - women in same experience help each other. Then we could support each other in using the service.”

Service users said that the services that they received during crisis was good, but that when they were out of danger and trying to rebuild their lives, services inevitably had to move onto the next case, due to risk considerations etc. Service users felt abandoned, and suggested peer mentors who would also been through a similar experience. Building up a social network of peers was considered a valuable outcome.

Finally, women were critical regarding the lack of prevention work, feeling that they learned too late what abuse, and abusive relationships, looked like and what the ‘warning signs’ might be.

From the customer mapping exercise with 21 women, conducted at the service user World Café, we were able to determine the number of contacts made subsequent to experiencing VAWG, who they disclosed to and whether the experience was positive or negative.

The charts overleaf outline the findings.



Figure 4. Number of agency contacts made by women

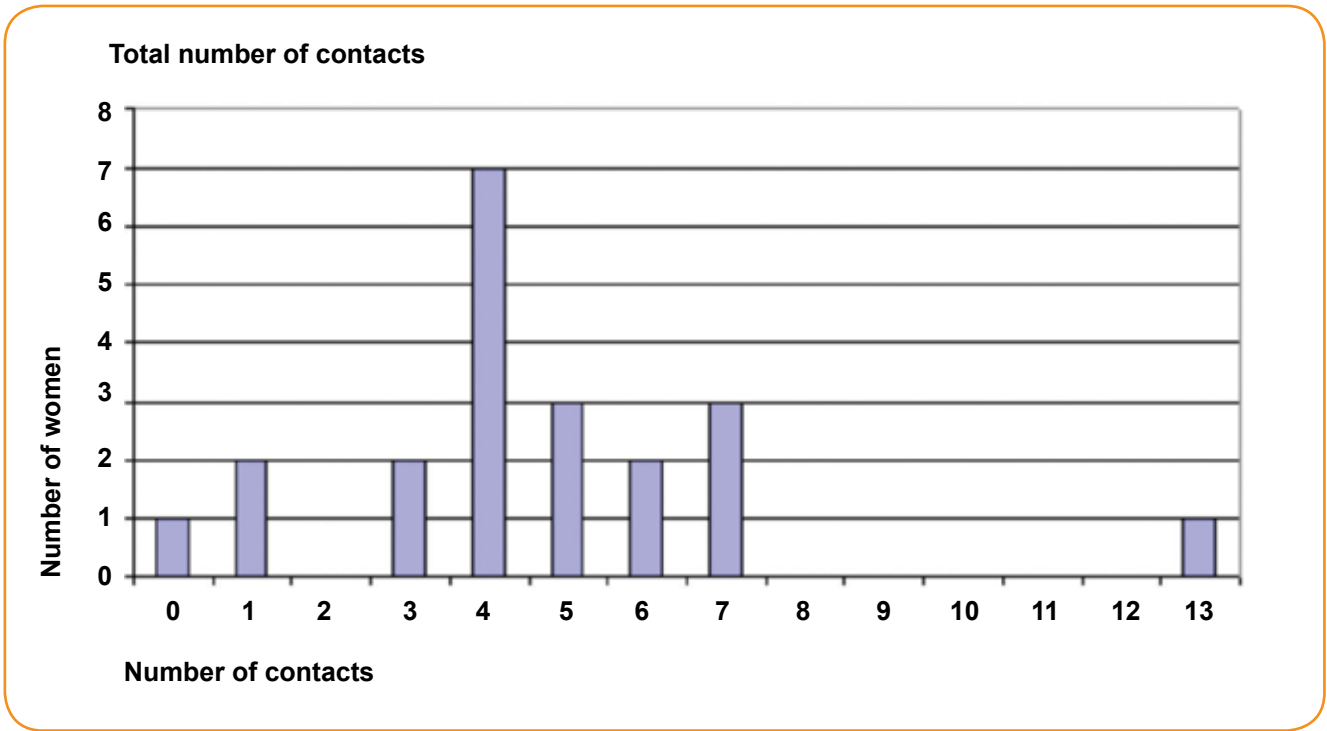
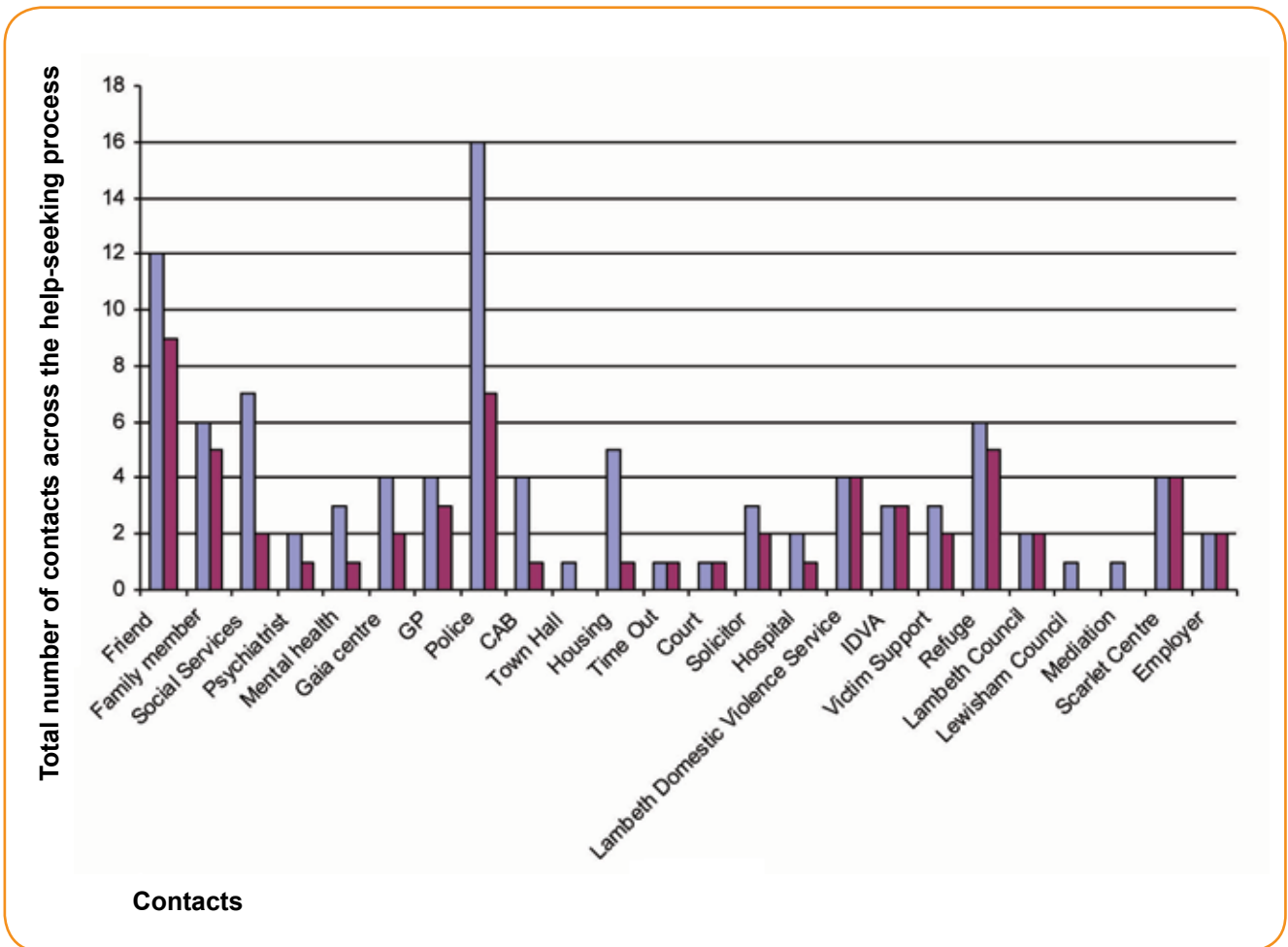


Figure 5. Total number of contacts across the help-seeking process and number of positive contacts



Outcomes

Based on the findings, the project made four recommendations outlined on the left-hand side of the table below. The actions that follow these recommendations are outlined on the right-hand side of the table.

Recommendations	Actions
<p>Improved service development – through the creation of a ‘one stop shop’ VAWG service that can support women around all the eight strands of gender based violence; to include the availability of child care and the development of a peer support element as part of the service model.</p>	<p>The creation of the one-stop shop and the joint commissioning of services has been implemented with the opening of the new VAWG Gaia Centre on 16 January 2012 - for further details see below.</p> <p>The insight also supported developing a business case which helped to secure further funding from a range of sources, and has enabled the actions outlined below.</p>
<p>Driving up standards – through the on-going delivery of multi-agency VAWG training for professionals in order to improve earlier identification and response, including targeted training for Social Care staff.</p>	<p>Lambeth Council formerly employed a part-time domestic violence trainer. This role has now been enhanced and funded to become a full-time VAWG Training and Awareness Raising Officer. The Council is now able to provide a VAWG training programme free of charge across Lambeth to agencies either in joint settings or individual settings, with the training being tailored to the specific needs of the audience.</p> <p>For example, Children’s Social Care will be further trained in identifying and assessing VAWG and how best to respond, how best to engage women rather than alienate them, and how to work with other agencies such as the Gaia Centre to offer a better support package to women.</p> <p>Furthermore, following the criticism of Social Services highlighted by the insight, Lambeth Social Care have taken this on-board and have funded a specialist domestic violence social worker in their referral and assessment team.</p> <p>The Training Officer will also work with schools and will deliver education programs in relation to changing attitudes together with other key partners. This is critical to the prevention and early intervention strategy.</p>

Recommendations	Actions
<p>Improved coordination of service provision – through the creation of a VAWG Programme Manager role, a VAWG forum, the VAWG one stop service and increased education work aimed at addressing attitudes amongst younger people</p>	<p>The Lambeth Council domestic violence coordinator role has been expanded into a VAWG programme manager role, and the various different policy streams have been brought under this umbrella role.</p> <p>Lambeth have also</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • established a VAWG operational group to deliver the VAWG strategy, which is chaired by the Assistant Director of Community Safety • set up a VAWG forum which meets every two months and involves 30 to 40 front-line practitioners to discuss policy issues, information sharing, good practise etc • re-commissioned the Gaia Centre.
<p>Support seeking help – through helping women to name their experience as abuse by an increased focus on awareness raising campaigns to ensure that women, including friends and family, know what support is available and how to access this.</p>	<p>Lambeth have developed their VAWG communication strategy and have rerun a number of social media campaigns, including the nationally acclaimed 'Know the Difference' campaign around sexual violence and consent. This was run over Christmas 2011 across tube stations, bus stops and bars. A new campaign has been developed in response to concerns around prostitution in Lambeth called 'Thinking of buying sex? Think again'.</p>



Developing Lambeth's Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy

One of the main outcomes of the insight project has been the developments of the integrated VAWG Strategy. Lambeth is one of the first councils in the United Kingdom to develop a strategy specifically addressing all forms of VAWG.

The principles of Lambeth's vision are to:

1. prevent violence from happening by challenging the attitudes and behaviours which foster it and intervening early where possible to prevent it.
2. provide adequate support where violence does occur .
3. work in partnership to obtain the best outcome for victims and their families .
4. take action to reduce the risk to women and girls who are victims of these crimes and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice.

The VAWG Strategy details a whole range of activities designed to ensure that Lambeth is a position to both prevent and respond to VAWG effectively. The Safer Lambeth Partnership Board, co-chaired by the Borough council's Chief Executive and the Lambeth Police Borough Commander, signed off the strategy in July 2011. A major component and commitment of the strategy was the re-commissioning of the Gaia Centre.

Re-commissioning of the Gaia Centre

The objective of re-commissioning the centre was to increase the centre's capacity, to amend the age of acceptance for service users and to refocus its approach towards all strands of VAWG rather than just domestic violence. By 2014 the new service is aiming to support approximately 1200 women per year. Previously, the centre had the capacity of around 800 women per year.

In order to ensure that the new Gaia Centre delivers a truly seamless VAWG service, the Lambeth Council commissioning project team brought together a range of funding streams from the Home Office, Supporting People (LBL), Housing Regeneration and Environment (LBL) and Lambeth First (Strategic Partnership), with the aim of using this 'joint pot' to commission one service model.

The VAWG commissioning project team designed a single specification addressing the priority areas as set out in the VAWG Strategy, taking into consideration the findings from the Lambeth VAWG Customer Insight Project. The service specification reflected the recommendations of service users ie one VAWG service delivery model, a peer mentoring scheme and child care provision.

In recognition of the increase in concern and prevalence of VAWG affecting younger women and girls, the service specification for the Gaia Centre also contained a requirement for the new provider to deliver a young women's advocacy scheme.

The service will also undertake outreach work in schools, youth settings and colleges, in partnership with the schools work commissioned by NHS Lambeth and CYPS, to address the links between serious youth violence, gangs and the exploitation of young women and girls.

Young women and girls who are at risk of gender based violence, including risk from gang involvement and/or gang exploitation will be provided with a support service at the Gaia Centre.

In addition to this it was also agreed the existing operational domestic violence Council staff, previously employed to run the domestic violence Gaia Centre, would be seconded to the new provider for the life of the contract to provide continuity of service, expertise and a true partnership approach.

“Thank you very much for all your help. You dealing with my housing issue has taken a huge stress off my mind so I can just deal with my sleeping. You’ve been so helpful.”

Client of the Gaia Centre

The open tender process to find a provider for the service attracted 34 expressions of interest and ultimately five detailed proposals (several from consortiums) to run the service. These proposals were robustly scrutinised and evaluated by a panel of officers and a service user and, ultimately, Refuge was awarded the contract to run the service.

The innovative service was launched in January 2012. The centre is one of the first of its kind in England providing a holistic and integrated support service. The Gaia Centre now works with females aged 14 plus, men aged 16 plus and their children, and provides specialist support around all forms of gender based violence, which includes:

- Independent Gender Violence Advocates (IGVAs)
- community outreach workers
- early intervention worker (14-16 year olds), including Female Genital Mutilation outreach

- a sanctuary scheme to support survivors to stay safe at home
- group support
- a peer support scheme to enable survivors to become more independent and regain control of their lives
- volunteering opportunities
- crèche facilities.

This means that all victims of VAWG can use the Gaia Centre as a first point of contact. The Gaia Centre is designed so that staff can either deliver the specialist VAWG support directly, or support the victim’s access to further services when needed.

The Gaia Centre also undertakes prevention work. Through outreach, awareness raising and advocacy the Centre works with the Council and other partners to challenge pervasive attitudes, cultures, norms and traditions that have allowed VAWG to become the problem it is today. This joint approach is necessary to provide protection and support to those who experience violence but also ensure that the cultures and attitudes that perpetuate VAWG are challenged and transformed.

“It’s wonderful that GAIA finally have a children’s specialist. It’s something that has really lacked and it’s fantastic that the young people have a specific keyworker. I think this will make a big difference.”

Service user

Benefits

Cost of VAWG in Lambeth

The impact of VAWG is most keenly felt by the victims but they also present significant costs to the public sector and the economy as a whole.

The following costs for Lambeth are estimates using the Home Office data⁵ and are based on domestic and sexual violence for the twelve months 2010-2011.

Prevalence of VAWG in Lambeth	Number of Incidents
Domestic violence	6,439
Sexual Offences (excluding rape)	5,754
Total costs (not including human and emotional costs)	£25,694,222
Physical and mental health care costs	£5,536,740
Criminal justice costs	£3,487,402
Social services costs	£656,746
Other costs (incl. housing, civil legal and employment costs)	£16,013,333
Human and emotional costs	£82,036,428

* This is not police reported data and is an estimate from the VAWG ready reckoner.

The human and emotional costs quantified above should not be underestimated. The fear and reality of violence is a major cause of death and disability for women⁶ and is linked to mental health problems including depression; anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); attempted and successful suicide; and misuse of drugs and alcohol. For example, academic research estimates the emotional impact of a serious wounding to be £97,000 per incident, while the emotional impact of a homicide was costed at £700,000.⁷

VAWG has far-reaching consequences for children, families, communities and society as a whole. Women who experience violence suffer a range of health and social problems that prevent them from fulfilling their full potential. This in turn lowers economic production and drains resources from employers and the public sector.⁸

“Thank you with love and appreciation. In this busy world we sometimes forget there are still nice people who do nice things. Thanks for being such a wonderful reminder.”
Thank you card signed by client and her kids

5 <http://www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/domesticviolence/domesticviolence072.htm>

6 WHO, 2005, Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against women

7 Brand, Sam and Richard Price (2000) The Economic and Social costs of Crime. Home Office Research Study 217. (London: Home Office).

8 Ending Violence against women: from words to action, Study of the Secretary-General, 9 October 2006
[http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Violence against women/launch/english/v.a.w-exeE-use.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Violence%20against%20women/launch/english/v.a.w-exeE-use.pdf)

Estimating the human and emotional costs

These estimates are based on a 'Willingness-To-Pay' (WTP) approach developed originally by the Department for Transport to measure the cost of traffic injuries and fatalities. The methodology places a value on the avoidance of fatalities and injuries by estimating what individuals would be willing to pay for a small decrease in the risk of such an accident. The figures the methodology has developed distinguishes between specific types of injuries following road traffic accidents, and these have been used as the basis of the costing of injuries sustained as a result of a violent crime by the Home Office.

Making the business case

The evidence produced for the customer insight project also further helped the VAWG commissioning team to both protect current funding streams, and secure additional funding. The VAWG team has successfully:

- preserved its funding from the Council, despite the Council experiencing a £37 million funding reduction from Government
- bid and won – in competition with other services - funding from the LAA of £275,000
- attracted £55,000 per year of matched funding from the Home Office
- attracted a one-off payment of £80,000 to address domestic violence perpetrators through Integrated Offender Management from the LAA.

Increasing service provision

The new One-Stop-Shop service opened in January 2012 and has the capacity to serve 1,200 in 2014. This is an increase of 500 from its current capacity. It has been designed to offer a joined up service to better support the multiple and complex needs of service users (see text box below).

“Over and over survivors tell us that finding help is complex, difficult and frustrating. They want to get all the help they need under one roof without having to share the traumatic details of their experiences with five, ten or even fifteen total strangers and they want services to work collaboratively and not in silos. This is why the Gaia Centre is so important and why LB Lambeth Council should be commended for genuinely listening to what survivors want and need and turning their views into reality.”

**Davina James-Hanman, Director,
Against Violence and Abuse:**



Increasing successful contact

The customer insight project revealed that service users typically contacted services five times before getting a successful resolution. It is hoped that the new VAWG Gaia model will mean that women should only need to contact the Centre once rather than making five other contacts. Since the centre serves up-to 1,200 women, that amounts to 5,000 contacts avoided.

Society estimates the cost of each customer face-to-face contact at £8.23 and each telephone contact at £3.21. If we assume that two-thirds of these contacts would be face-to-face, that equates to savings of £33,000 per year.

This also a conservative estimate – the cost of a police callout, assuming attendance and administrative time of 1.5 officers totalling approximately one hour of police time per call is estimated to be at least £32.

“Just from talking to you I feel so much lighter. Thank you for taking the time with me. I didn’t think I had any options so today has been really helpful, I feel much better. I feel like it’s been really worthwhile coming in to see you. I will think about my options now, thanks for seeing me”

Client of the Gaia Centre

What support is available at the Gaia Centre?

Everyone’s needs are unique and the Gaia centre works with women to create a support plan that helps keep them safe. For example, the individual may need to:

- talk to someone who understands what they are going through
- receive support if they are considering reporting to the police
- move away from the area to increase their safety
- access a refuge or other temporary accommodation
- stay at home but want to find out how they can keep safe
- receive support if they are considering going to court
- access legal advice
- manage their financial situation
- find out about support networks in their community
- get specialist support for their children.

What services are available?

The Gaia Centre provides one-to-one confidential, non-judgmental, independent support, including:

- a specialist independent gender violence advocacy (IGVA) team to support women and young girls who are at risk of serious harm
- a specialist service for 14-16 year-old girls
- a sanctuary scheme to help women remain in their home safely
- group support
- a peer support scheme to help break women’s isolation; to help them to build social networks and to help them regain control of their life
- volunteering opportunities.

Decreasing duplication

Furthermore, five other related services have been integrated into the centre, so the initial front line assessment session – which may take between one and two hours – can collect information and make referrals to the other five in-house services. As a result the new model is likely to be saving up to eight hours a day in contact and referral time. If that applied to 20 per cent of service users – ie 240 people per year – that equates to the annual working hours of a frontline employee.

An example of this is the work the Gaia Centre now does with the Sanctuary Scheme. The Sanctuary Scheme was set up to help improve the security of the victim's property. Before being included in the Gaia Centre model, the victim would typically have had to go through an assessment at the Gaia Centre, and then apply to the Sanctuary Scheme to gain the additional security element. This would have required them to tell their story all over again to another agency, which would often be a traumatic experience. Now that the Sanctuary Scheme is part of the Gaia Centre, the relevant details are captured as part of the initial assessment. Furthermore, Gaia staff will act as an ongoing advocate for the victim and see the process through to installation.

The most severe form of VAWG is murder, and 22 per cent of all murders in London in 2010/2011 were domestic violence related. The financial cost per murder case has been estimated at £107,299, while costs to the criminal justice system have been estimated at £118,299. In the last two financial years there were two murders per year in Lambeth, whereas in 2011/2012 there were none.

Governance

Lambeth's Social Inclusion Board, chaired by the Executive Director for Adults' and Community Services, oversaw the project. The social inclusion board is a partnership board with representation from Adults and Community Services, Housing, Children and Young People's Service, Probation, Health & Police. The meeting is quarterly and it is chaired by Lambeth Council Executive Director for ACS. The SIB set up the VAWG strategy group to develop the Safer Lambeth VAWG strategy.

The Social Inclusion Board leads on co-ordination of commissioning across funding streams in relation to social inclusion. The Social Inclusion Board provided many of the participants in the VAWG Strategy Group. Ultimately, as commissioners, the Social Inclusion Board granted the funding for the Gaia Centre based on the business case the insight supported.

The Executive Director kept the Executive Member for communities and community safety and the Executive Member for health and wellbeing informed of progress as part of their weekly briefing sessions.

In addition, the project reported quarterly to the Safer Lambeth Violent Crime Partnership Action Group (PAG), chaired by Lambeth Police Deputy Borough Commander. The PAG reports into the Safer Lambeth Partnership Delivery Group which reports ultimately to the Safer Lambeth Executive Board. The recommendations of the insight project were fed into the development of the VAWG strategy that was ultimately approved by Co-Chairs of the Safer Lambeth Executive.

Resourcing

The project won funding of £93,000 to pursue the insight work. The insight project was managed by Domestic Violence Co-ordinator (2 x days a week), with input and support from the Head of Policy, Research and Customer Relation (1/2 day a fortnight), Gaia Centre Co-ordinator (1 x day a week) and Consultation Manager (1/2 day a week).

Role	Fee
Consultation Officer Facilitated the focus groups, carried out the one-to-one interviews, coordinated the World Café, and supported the recruitment of participants	£25,000
Research Agency Carried out the customer journey mapping, and helped to prepare the final report	£33,000
Interpretation and translation	£3,000
Consultation and engagement activities	£15,000
Administrative support	£7,000
VAWG summit	£10,000

the
Gaia
centre

Run by Refuge

**Working in Lambeth
to end gender violence.**

Challenges and lessons learnt

Value of insight

The insight has proved to be powerful in making the case across Lambeth for an integrated VAWG approach, and it has helped to challenge the received wisdom. It has also given the different partners common ground from which to start their strategy dialogue. By providing an external, independent source of evidence, and a human voice, the insight work has added impetus and clarity to dialogue across the partnership, and has demonstrated the value of a customer-led approach to the Lambeth Council. Following the success of this project, insight-based and customer-led projects have also been pursued.

Recruitment

The project originally tried to organise a total of 16 focus groups, but found it difficult to recruit participants for six of them. This is partly due to adverse weather – a period of heavy snow over the Christmas holidays and the lower numbers than expected attended. The lesson for other projects is to be aware of the challenge that recruitment poses, and the effect of the time of year in terms of season and holiday periods.

The project took a number of steps to encourage attendance. The times of the workshops were determined based on the availability of the prospective participants and the support workers from the service providers. The venues chosen based on their proximity to underground station and bus routes, and participants are offered free crèche facilities as well as access to interpreters and their travel expenses reimbursed.

“We don’t often get the opportunity to step back and undertake in-depth research with service users. Undertaking a long-term reflective piece of research is a luxury, we very often don’t take the time to research and reflect in the way we should if we our services are to meet service users’ needs”.

James Lee, Senior Strategic Commissioning Manager, ACS, London Borough of Lambeth

Inviting feedback via postcards

The project distributed over 2000 pre-printed and prepaid postcards around the borough inviting women to provide feedback on VAWG services. However, there were very few postcards returned. The project feels this is because they did not have sufficient time to fully publicise the initiative and follow-up with the outlets where postcards had been distributed. Any project wishing to deploy this method should take this into account.

“Sometimes tells you something obvious but that you never really thought of before. We were all aware of the statistics about the number of women who returned to these abusive relationships. But when you realise the lack of support post incident, and how fragmented services are, you see why it happens. We realise now that if we are ever going to make our services effective then we have to address the whole need from start to finish, and that if you don’t do that you’re just setting the individual up to fail. We made this holistic approach front and centre in the specification for the new Gaia Centre, and in a tender Interview because it’s very important part of this new service.”

James Lee, Senior Strategic Commissioning Manager, ACS, London Borough of Lambeth

Next steps

Pursuant to the objectives of the work and the recommendations that were generated, the next steps are to:

- develop the Gaia Centre into a Violence Against Women and Girls Centre and fulfill its capacity of 1,200 service users per year
- review and evaluate the Gaia Centre, and develop the scope of future provision based on service user feedback and any emerging needs/trends
- link this work to women who are engaged in activities that are the result of abuse and violence but that may not be immediately apparent – such as prostitution
- increase the Borough's early intervention and preventative work, including VAWG awareness campaigns and training programmes
- meet the commitments and objectives as set down in the Safer Lambeth VAWG strategy.

“What we were really keen on doing was engaging with women and talking to them about what support service they would like to see in the future”.

Jade Hovey,
VAWG Programme Manager,
London Borough of Lambeth





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