

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE Themed Debate – Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls	
REPORT OF Councillor Patricia Callaghan, Cabinet Member for Community Resilience	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Council	DATE 13 July 2026
<p>SUMMARY OF REPORT</p> <p>This report provides background information to support a themed Full Council debate on 13 July 2026, focusing on Camden’s approach to preventing violence against women and girls (VAWG). It outlines the current context, key challenges, and the changes needed to strengthen our collective response to better support residents and communities.</p> <p>The debate will also provide an opportunity to reflect on how the Council’s sustained focus and investment in this area has helped shape a stronger organisational culture and partnership approach. This has been a key catalyst in the development of a new draft VAWG Strategy for 2026 – 2030 which will be finalised and agreed in summer 2026.</p> <p>The draft Strategy has been informed by extensive engagement, including a borough-wide VAWG consultation led by the Council. Contributions from residents, voluntary and community sector organisations, victims and survivors, have provided critical insights to ensure the strategy reflects lived experience and local need and is grounded in what will make the greatest difference in Camden.</p> <p>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information The Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Needs Assessment for Camden October 2025 was used in preparation for this report.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Shari Kassrai – Principal Policy and Projects Officer Corporate Services, 5 Pancras Square N1C 4AG Shari.kassrai@camden.gov.uk</p>	
<p>RECOMMENDATIONS The Council is asked to consider the report.</p>	

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Osian Jones'. The signature is stylized with a large, circular initial 'O' and a horizontal line underlining the name.

Signed:

Osian Jones, Director of Strategy, Design and Insight

Date: July 2026

1. Background

- 1.1 Violence against women and girls (VAWG), including domestic violence and abuse (DVA), remains a significant issue in Camden, with profound impacts on the safety, health and wellbeing of residents. It is widely recognised as both a serious public health concern and a fundamental inequality, disproportionately affecting women and girls while reinforcing wider social and economic disparities.
- 1.2 VAWG encompasses a broad range of harmful behaviours, including domestic abuse, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, stalking and harassment, and other forms of gender-based violence. In Camden, domestic violence and abuse represents a substantial proportion of cases, although it is important to recognise that the true scale of harm is likely to be much greater than recorded data suggests, due to underreporting and barriers to disclosure.
- 1.3 The impacts of VAWG are far-reaching and often long-lasting. Survivors and victims can experience significant physical, emotional and psychological harm and homicide as well as experience wider impacts on housing stability, financial security, employment and mental health. These harms are not experienced in isolation and often intersect with other forms of disadvantage or vulnerability. Children and young people are also directly affected, both as victim/survivors and through the lasting effects of growing up in environments where abuse occurs.
- 1.4 In Camden, the local picture reflects both complexity and contrast. The borough is characterised by a diverse population, a high density of services and institutions, and strong voluntary and community sector provision. This creates significant opportunities for partnership working and early intervention but also presents challenges in ensuring that responses to VAWG are coordinated, consistent and accessible across the system. Demand for support remains high, and some victim/survivors particularly those with multiple or complex needs continue to face barriers in accessing timely and appropriate help.
- 1.5 The Camden Violence Against Women and Girls [Public Health Needs Assessment](#) highlights both the scale and complexity of need within the borough, as well as the range of provision currently in place to respond. It identifies patterns of risk across different forms of violence and abuse alongside gaps and pressures within existing services.
- 1.6 There is clear and sustained commitment within Camden to addressing VAWG. The Council alongside its partners has invested in a range of services, initiatives and collaborative approaches to both respond to and prevent violence and abuse. This includes specialist support services, safeguarding arrangements, and wider community and prevention activity. While these efforts have led to important progress, the needs assessment highlights the need to strengthen the overall system response to ensure that it is sufficiently joined-up, trauma-informed and responsive to the full range of needs within the borough.

- 1.7 Camden's approach to preventing and responding to violence against women and girls is rooted in its wider organisational values of being a compassionate, inclusive and responsive borough. This means putting the safety, dignity and voice of survivors and victims at the centre of how services are designed and delivered, and working in a way that is relational, trauma-informed and grounded in trust.
- 1.8 This approach builds on sustained work over a number of years, including the leadership and challenge provided by Camden's Women's Forum, which has played an important role in shaping priorities, elevating lived experience and strengthening the Council's focus on violence against women and girls. Alongside this, the Council has made additional investment of £400,000 per year to strengthen provision and improve the support available to residents, complemented by wider commissioning and partnership activity.
- 1.9 The Council has also prioritised strengthening its organisational response. This includes work to build awareness, confidence and capability across the workforce so that staff are better equipped to recognise and respond to abuse, including forms of harm that are often hidden. As part of this commitment, all staff have been required to complete domestic abuse training as part of mandatory learning, reinforcing that preventing and responding to VAWG is a shared responsibility across the organisation.
- 1.10 Collectively, Camden Council's investment has supported a stronger, more joined-up system response, with improved partnership working, increased organisational focus and clearer pathways of support. The Council will continue to build on this progress, working with partners, communities, survivors and external expertise to ensure services remain responsive, inclusive and centred on what matters most to residents.
- 1.11 A growing body of evidence highlights the importance of adopting a whole-system, public health approach to VAWG. This means addressing not only the immediate risks and harms faced by victim/survivors, but also the underlying drivers of violence and inequality, and investing in prevention and early intervention to reduce harm over the long term. There is an increasing recognition of the need to design services and interventions that are shaped by lived experience ensuring that support is accessible, inclusive and effective for all communities in Camden.
- 1.12 This context provides the foundation for understanding the scale and nature of VAWG in the borough, and for considering how Camden can continue to strengthen its response. It highlights both the progress made and the challenges that remain and sets the direction for further action to prevent violence, support victim/survivors and improve outcomes for residents.

2. Violence Against Women and Girls in Camden

- 2.1 Data and insight from [Camden's Violence Against Women and Girls \(VAWG\) Needs Assessment](#) (published in 2025) demonstrate the scale, complexity and lived reality of violence and abuse experienced by women and girls in the borough. Drawing on quantitative data and qualitative evidence, the assessment highlights both recorded harm and the wider often hidden experiences of victim/survivors.
- 2.2 Recorded Metropolitan Police Service data indicates that in 2024 Camden's VAWG offence rate was 29 offences per 1,000 female residents, placing the borough 11th highest across London and above the London average. Since 2020 recorded VAWG offences in Camden have increased by 8.2%, compared with a 5.7% increase across London, indicating a faster rate of growth locally. VAWG related offences account for approximately 8% of all recorded crime in the borough.
- 2.3 The data shows that the majority of recorded VAWG offences in Camden fall within domestic violence and abuse (DVA), stalking and harassment, and sexual violence. When disaggregated by abuse type Camden records higher than average rates of sexual violence and stalking and harassment compared with other London boroughs, alongside elevated levels of physical and sexual abuse and violent or threatening behaviour. While recorded DVA rates appear lower than some boroughs, evidence from across the system suggests this is more likely to reflect underreporting rather than lower prevalence.
- 2.4 This underreporting is reinforced by data from council services, Adult Social Care, Children's Safeguarding and Social Work, and Camden Safety Net all identify significant volumes of DVA and other forms of abuse that are not reflected in police recorded crime data. This indicates gaps between lived experience, service contact and formal reporting. Victim withdrawal particularly in cases involving coercive control, is identified as a major barrier to justice and sustained safety. Younger and older women are less likely to progress through support pathways despite being identified as high-risk groups.
- 2.5 Housing and homelessness data further illustrates the scale and severity of DVA in Camden. The needs assessment identifies a sharp rise in DVA related housing and homelessness applications, alongside evidence of significant unmet need among homeless women. Housing insecurity, financial control and abuse frequently intersect, both increasing risk and limiting survivor/victim ability to leave abusive situations safely.
- 2.6 The assessment also highlights strong links between VAWG and mental health, substance use and wider social complexity. Survivor/victims with multiple or complex needs, including those from marginalised communities, face additional barriers to accessing timely and appropriate support. There is a particular lack of long term and recovery focused support, especially once immediate risk has reduced despite evidence that the impacts of abuse can be lifelong and include post separation harm.
- 2.7 Children and young people are significantly affected by domestic abuse and are recognised within the needs assessment as survivors/victims in their own right.

Exposure to abuse has both immediate and long-term consequences, including increased risk of experiencing abuse later in life, reinforcing the importance of early intervention and prevention to break intergenerational cycles of harm.

- 2.8 Alongside prevalence and impact, the needs assessment identifies several system level challenges. These include inconsistent definitions of VAWG across services, incomplete recording of protected characteristics, and fragmented data systems all of which limit the ability to fully understand patterns of harm and inequality. Changes to crime recording systems have also affected year-on-year comparability. These issues highlight the need for improved data quality, shared definitions and more integrated approaches to monitoring and analysis.
- 2.9 Qualitative evidence from survivors/victim and professionals adds depth to the data. While many individuals receive life-changing support others describe fragmented pathways, re-traumatisation through repeated disclosures and mistrust of systems. Professionals report that short term funding, service gaps and coordination challenges affect service capacity, workforce wellbeing and the consistency of support.
- 2.10 Overall, the data from the needs assessment presents a clear picture of high and growing need, significant underreporting and persistent inequalities in experiences and outcomes. It reinforces the importance of a whole system, public health approach that balances effective response with prevention, early intervention and long-term recovery, and provides the evidence base for the strategic priorities set out in the draft Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.

3. Overview of Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy

- 3.1 The draft Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy 2026 – 2030 sets out Camden’s strategic approach to preventing violence, strengthening early identification, improving support for survivors and victims, and holding those who cause harm to account. It is Camden Council’s first standalone VAWG strategy and provides a clear framework for coordinated action across the borough. The draft strategy reflects Camden’s wider organisational approach, placing importance not only on what is delivered but how services are experienced, and emphasising relational, trauma-informed and strengths-based practice across the system.
- 3.2 The strategy is grounded in Camden’s VAWG Needs Assessment and reflects local data, lived experience, practitioner insight and partner engagement. It recognises violence against women and girls as a serious public health issue and a driver of inequality, requiring a whole system informed response beyond statutory services alone.
- 3.3 The strategy adopts the United Nations definition of violence against women and girls and takes a life course approach, recognising that women and girls may experience multiple and overlapping forms of abuse. While domestic abuse remains a significant presenting issue locally, the strategy also identifies

the need to strengthen responses to other forms of violence, including sexual violence, stalking, 'honour'-based abuse, forced marriage, Female Genital Mutilation, sexual exploitation and online abuse. It also explicitly acknowledges system induced trauma and commits to more trauma informed, anti-racist and culturally competent practice.

- 3.4 The draft strategy is structured around five strategic priorities:
- **Prevention**, through a public health and life-course approach that challenges harmful norms and behaviours;
 - **Earlier identification and support**, strengthening professional responses across services;
 - **Holistic support for adult and child survivors and victims**, including housing, mental health and recovery;
 - **Holding perpetrators to account**, through a whole-system approach that centres survivor and child safety; and
 - **Working in partnership**, strengthening coordination across the Council, partners, communities and survivors.
- 3.5 The draft strategy places a strong emphasis on equity and lived experience, recognising that some women and girls face heightened risk and barriers to support, and that children are victims in their own right. Survivor voice is embedded throughout, with commitments to strengthen meaningful participation in delivery and oversight.
- 3.6 The draft strategy sets the strategic direction for 2026 – 2030 and will be supported by a separate implementation plan, setting out actions, responsibilities, milestones and measures of success. Delivery and accountability will be overseen through established bespoke and informed governance arrangements, including the VAWG Delivery Group, Strategic Group and Partnership Board, ensuring accountability and alignment with wider Council and partnership priorities.
- 3.7 The draft strategy has been informed by a borough-wide VAWG consultation with residents, survivors, victims, partners and community organisations. The draft Strategy was agreed by Cllr Callaghan as Cabinet Member for Safer Communities in March 2026¹. The feedback received provided important insight into how violence and abuse are experienced locally, where current responses are working, and where change is needed. The consultation included the draft Strategy and also key background information from our Needs Assessment². The following section summarises the consultation approach and the key themes that emerged and how these have informed the draft strategy. The Strategy will be finalised and agreed in summer 2026.

4. Summary of Consultation feedback

¹ ["Share your views on Camden's plans to tackle violence against women and girls", March 2026](#)

² [Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls \(VAWG\) Consultation Survey, March – April 2026](#)

- 4.1 A borough wide consultation on the draft Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy was carried out between 23 February and 22 March 2026. The consultation was promoted through partner networks, voluntary and community sector organisations, internal teams, the VAWG Board and wider stakeholder channels.
- 4.2 A total of 97 responses were received with respondents asked to comment on the overall ambition, the five strategic priorities, the proposed objectives and outcomes, and the approach set out in the draft Strategy. Open ended questions also captured lived experience, safety concerns, and suggestions for improvement.
- 4.3 The consultation demonstrated strong overall support for the direction of the strategy:
- 73% of respondents agreed that the ambition reflected what is needed in Camden
 - 82% felt the overall approach was the right one
 - 76% said the priorities were clear and easy to understand
 - 63% believed the proposed priorities would help tackle VAWG in the borough
 - Over half (52 – 54%) of respondents reported having lived experience of VAWG indicating that feedback was significantly informed by survivor and victim perspectives.
- 4.4 Responses were overwhelmingly from women (over 90%), which likely reflects the focus of the strategy on the lived experience of women and girls. Most respondents were aged 35 and over, with low participation from younger women despite evidence that younger age groups face heightened risk for some forms of VAWG. Racially minoritised communities, people experiencing economic insecurity and some disabled groups were underrepresented, which is acknowledged as a limitation and reinforces the need for continued targeted engagement beyond the consultation.
- 4.5 Across quantitative and qualitative responses, several consistent themes emerged. There was strong support for prevention and early intervention. Prevention was ranked as the highest priority overall, with respondents emphasising education, early intervention and tackling harmful social norms, particularly misogyny and violence-supportive attitudes. There was strong support for prevention that focuses on changing perpetrator behaviour, not on women managing risk.
- 4.6 Earlier identification and better professional responses were another key theme. Respondents highlighted the importance of professionals being able to recognise abuse earlier, including non-physical, hidden and coercive forms of harm. There was strong support for mandatory training, clearer referral pathways and more consistent trauma-informed practice across services.
- 4.7 Holistic and long-term support for survivors and victims was a further theme.

There was widespread agreement that survivors need accessible, sustained support, including mental health, housing, financial and legal assistance. Many respondents raised concerns about under resourced services and gaps in long term recovery support, particularly for marginalised groups and children.

- 4.8 Perpetrator accountability and trust in the justice system was reflected strongly as a priority by respondents. While holding perpetrators to account was ranked lower than prevention and support, respondents were clear that accountability is essential. Many expressed frustration and mistrust in police and criminal justice responses, particularly in cases of domestic abuse, stalking and post-separation harm, and called for clearer consequences and improved system responses.
- 4.9 Respondents wanted to see the Council convening strong partnership working and supporting community confidence in tackling VAWG. Respondents supported partnership working but emphasised that it must lead to visible, practical change. Stronger communication, clearer roles, and better engagement with local communities and specialist organisations were repeatedly highlighted.
- 4.10 Respondents with lived experience of VAWG described barriers to being believed, supported and being re-traumatised through repeated disclosures and system responses. Responses also highlighted strongly fear of reporting due to past experiences with police and statutory services and ongoing safety concerns linked to housing, estates, public spaces and anti-social behaviour.
- 4.11 There was a strong call for culturally competent, inclusive services, recognition of intersectionality, and clearer support for women facing additional barriers including migrant women, disabled women, older women, and those experiencing multiple disadvantage.
- 4.12 Overall, the consultation confirmed that the strategic direction of the Strategy is supported by Camden residents who were engaged, including survivor/victims of VAWG, while highlighting areas where the strategy needs to be strengthened and respondents feedback has directly informed revisions to the draft strategy and will continue to shape the development of the implementation plan.

5. Next steps

- 5.1 The themed debate provides an important opportunity to shape the next phase of Camden's approach to preventing violence against women and girls, ensuring that the new Strategy, once agreed, is translated into meaningful and measurable action.
- 5.2 The Council and its partners will prioritise the development of the detailed implementation plan, setting out clear actions, responsibilities, timescales and measures of success. This will include clarifying governance arrangements and accountability across delivery structures to ensure that progress is effectively monitored and that there is clear ownership of outcomes at all levels of the system.

- 5.3 A key focus will be on prioritisation in the first year of delivery. Recognising the scale and complexity of need, the Council will work with partners, communities and survivors to identify the areas where early action will have the greatest impact. This will require making clear and, where necessary, difficult choices to ensure resources are targeted effectively and drive tangible change.

6. Comments of the Director of Finance

- 6.1 The Director of Finance has been consulted and has no comments to add.

7. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

- 7.1 The Borough Solicitor has been consulted on the contents of this report and has no comment to make at this time.

8. Environmental Implications

- 8.1 The contents of this report have no environment impacts.