

Cllr Susan Fajana-Thomas  
**Mayor and Cabinet Office**  
 London Borough of Hackney  
 Hackney Town Hall  
 Mare Street  
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22nd April 2026

Dear Cllr Ogundemuren

**Eliminating Violence Against Women & Girls Strategy 2025-29**

I am writing in response to your letter following the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission discussion on the [Eliminating Violence Against Women & Girls \(VAWG\) Strategy 2022-25](#)

I am grateful to the Commission for their comments and suggestions for improving the delivery of Hackney’s Eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. I have addressed each specific recommendation in turn below, including those we are already implementing.

Suggestion	Response
Raising awareness and developing practice	
1- Set out the actions that will be taken to improve the local approach to data collection and sharing on VAWG, and in particular to reach a shared data set regarding all casework and referrals with third sector organisations, the police and other statutory agencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new subgroup of the VAWG Strategic Board will be created to focus on Data and Performance. This group will report annually to the VAWG Strategic Board.</li> <li>• The Terms of Reference for the Data and Performance subgroup have been drafted and will be brought for sign-off at the next VAWG Strategic Board on 28th April 2026.</li> <li>• Informal discussions with other Local Authorities in East London are ongoing to share learning/insights about commonalities in this area around approaches to gathering and reporting on partnership data</li> </ul>
2- Set out the actions that Central East Borough Command Unit	MPS Central East Borough Command Unit now has Hackney Council’s VAWG lead as a member of their

<p>specifically will take to enable more efficient and automated information sharing data on VAWG with key agencies and third sector organisations, building on and utilising the new integrated 'Connect' IT system.</p>	<p>quarterly Central East VAWG Board which will enable greater sharing and analysis of data. Data derived from the MPS Connect system will be a key component of the data that is shared and analysed.</p> <p>Hackney's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Board will on 28th April decide upon a proposal for a new quarterly sub-group of the Board focusing on VAWG Data and Performance. This Data and Performance sub-group will enable a whole-partnership approach to gathering, understanding and learning from data and developing responses accordingly. The VAWG Data and Performance Group will report to the VAWG Strategic Board annually.</p>
<p>3 - Create and publish an annual report highlighting performance and impact over the previous year of the Eliminating VAWG Strategy, as a means of supporting accountability and transparency and offering key stakeholders and the public an opportunity to track progress.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● An annual summary report will be published regarding each Financial Year by the end of June of the new Financial year.</li> <li>● By June 30th 2026 a summary report will be published regarding Financial Year 2025/26.</li> </ul>
<p>4 - Ensure that a minimum number of VAWG Operational Group and sub-group meetings are held in person each year, in recognition of the benefits face-to-face meetings can have on building stronger relationships, improving communication and boosting collaboration and creativity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Domestic Abuse Intervention Service (the Council team leading on VAWG matters) agrees that in-person meetings can have benefits. These benefits have to be set against the 'opportunity costs' incurred by in-person meetings for participants e.g. travel time, differing levels of access to physical spaces, differing levels of access to ICT within meetings etc.</li> <li>● The quarterly VAWG Operational Group has agreed to have at least one meeting in person each Financial Year. The other VAWG Strategic Board sub-groups will be offered the same opportunity.</li> </ul>
<p>Preventing VAWG and tackling misogyny</p>	
<p>5 - Develop an action plan setting out how Hackney Education will proactively engage all independent and non-maintained schools to encourage them to join the drive to tackle misogyny at all levels and empower them to address any form of VAWG that they may encounter at their respective establishments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A new subgroup of the VAWG Strategic Board will be created to focus on VAWG and Education. This group will report annually to the VAWG Strategic Board.</li> <li>● The Terms of Reference for the VAWG and Education subgroup have been drafted and will be brought for sign-off at the next VAWG Strategic Board on 28th April 2026.</li> <li>● This quarterly sub-group will build on the work already done between Hackney Education, the Domestic Abuse Intervention Service and Young Hackney in this area.</li> <li>● The VAWG and Education subgroup will devise and implement, in partnership with schools and other stakeholders, a plan for improving the whole-system response across schools regarding identifying and addressing misogyny. The subgroup will consider how we engage independent schools who are independent</li> </ul>

	of the local authority.
<p>6 - Set out how children and families will be supported where aggression or violence occur to develop safe and positive parenting, recognising that parenting can be extremely challenging whether a victim / survivor is navigating child contact with an abusive ex-partner, managing a child's emotional responses or trying to find a way to manage the impact of trauma.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hackney already offers a wide range of excellent support for parents. Through the Children and Family Hubs parents in Hackney can access evidence-based parenting programmes such as Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities, Togetherness (previously Solihull), Incredible Years and Reducing Parental Conflict. Families can also access the Reducing Parental Conflict App Digital App.</li> <li>● Since 2019 Hackney Children and Families Service has been using the <i>Safe and Together</i> approach when responding to families in which children have been affected by domestic abuse. This approach prioritises child safeguarding, supports non-abusive parents and holds to account parents whose behaviour harms their children.</li> <li>● As part of the Families First Partnership Reforms, Hackney's Family Help Service will provide an inclusive relational approach to providing support to families across the spectrum of targeted early help, child in need and child protection. This will include mainstreaming messages around domestic violence and abuse in all parenting interventions as well as working together with DAIS to consider parenting programmes designed to support the repairing of the parent child relationship as a result of domestic violence and abuse.</li> <li>●</li> </ul>
<p>7 - Set out how DAIS, Community Safety and the Central East Borough Command Unit will work collaboratively alongside licensed premises in the Night Time Economy to prevent harassment or abuse and ensure action is taken where women and girls have been harmed in those settings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hackney DAIS, Community Safety and the Police are already working collaboratively with licensed premises under the Hackney Nights initiative.</li> <li>● The quarterly NTE Strategic Board is a tier two community safety strategic board which reports to the Community Safety Partnership Statutory Officer Group (CSP SOG) and has strategic responsibility for the delivery of Hackney's Evening and Night-Time Economy Strategy and in particular the three foundational pillars of - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Safety, Security and Wellbeing</li> <li>- Promoting Inclusivity</li> <li>- Shaping the Evening Experience and Supporting Growth in the Economy.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● The NTE Strategic Board provides scrutiny, challenge and direction to work undertaken in partnership with licensed premises and other key stakeholders to tackle harassment and abuse with a key focus on gender-based violence.</li> <li>● To hold a late-night levy licence, venues are encouraged (and often required via licensing conditions) to undergo specialised VAWG Training. The Community Safety Team has undertaken training with over 600 licensing staff and undertaken 632 visits to licensed premises</li> </ul>

	<p>over the last 12 months.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The council maintains a centralised digital hub for licensees. This provides instant access to toolkits including “drink spiking” prevention, reporting templates, and up-to-the-minute safety briefings, ensuring that independent bars and large clubs alike are operating under a unified safeguarding strategy rather than working in silos.</li> <li>● Hackney supports the NTE by funding specialised welfare staff and "Safe Spaces" within high-density areas. Licensees work alongside these teams to ensure that vulnerable patrons are escorted to safety or medical care without placing an undue burden solely on venue security. To date Community safety Has undertaken 19 specific welfare days, handed out over 400 personal alarms and undertaken over 617 Welfare and Vulnerability (WAVE) training sessions with licensing staff.</li> <li>● We have also implemented the “Ask for Angela” initiative in the NTE. Hackney Nights ensures that the "Ask for Angela" safety scheme is standardised across all licensed premises. This allows vulnerable patrons to discreetly signal to staff that they feel unsafe, triggering a pre-planned response where staff can assist the individual in leaving safely or calling a taxi without alerting the aggressor. We have also undertaken “Ask for Angela” training and “Cold Calling” tests to optimise its effectiveness.</li> <li>● The response includes borough-wide campaigns (like "Don't Be a Bystander") that licensees display prominently. This is paired with "Safety Audits" where the council and licensees walk the footprint of the venue to identify "blind spots," such as poorly lit entry points or secluded smoking areas, to improve natural surveillance.</li> <li>● Through the use of the Townlink radio system and regular "Pubwatch" meetings, licensees share real-time intelligence about specific perpetrators or emerging trends. This allows the council and police to deploy resources ,like the Enforcement Officers,Police and CCTV,to the specific streets or premises where they are most needed.</li> <li>● During the annual UN "16 Days of Activism" (25 November, 2025– 10 December,2025), the Community Safety Team intensified its NTE presence through high-visibility "Welfare Pop-ups" in Dalston and Shoreditch. These joint operations between the Police and Community Safety Partners provided public safety equipment, drink spiking awareness, and direct pathways to support for victims of gender-based violence.</li> </ul>
<p>8 - Develop an engagement plan to raise awareness of what online</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Digitally facilitated VAWG is an area about which victims/survivors and professionals can obtain support</li> </ul>

<p>and digital facilitated VAWG looks like, provide confidential support through the DAIS and other specialist services and promote online safety and help people secure their devices.</p>	<p>from the Council's Domestic Abuse Intervention Service, 3rd sector VAWG agencies and the Metropolitan Police Service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As part of its ongoing training offer, the Council's DAIS provides training to the partnership on Cyber / Technological Abuse.</li> <li>• Hackney's Violence Against Women and Girls Operational Group will, in Financial Year 2026/27, develop and implement a plan to address digitally facilitated VAWG, raising awareness and providing advice / support / intervention.</li> <li>• Hackney's plan will be informed by the London-wide approach to digitally facilitated VAWG as this is expected to provide cross-borough coordination in this area.</li> </ul>
<p>Supporting victims / survivors of VAWG</p>	
<p>9 - Develop an engagement plan to break down the barriers between the police and migrant communities which may be preventing victims / survivors with insecure immigration status and/or no recourse to public funds from reporting their experiences of VAWG, for example through regular police outreach and targeted messaging.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council's Domestic Abuse Intervention Service works closely with Welcome Hackney and other key stakeholders in the statutory and 3rd sector both operationally and strategically to ensure that victims / survivors with insecure immigration status and/or no recourse to public funds are safeguarded from harm.</li> <li>• DAIS contributed to the work that has led to Hackney being officially recognised as a Borough of Sanctuary, officially affirming its commitment to supporting refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers.</li> <li>• DAIS will continue to work closely with Welcome Hackney, MPS and other key stakeholders to raise awareness and addresses concerns of migrant communities regarding reporting VAWG offences to the police</li> </ul>
<p>10 - Set out its plans for ensuring the voices and experiences of children and young people who are victims of domestic abuse are listened to, understood and captured by agencies and practitioners to ensure they are represented at both an operational and strategic level in all areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hackney Children and Families Service (CFS) practitioners explore and record the lived experience of children routinely as part of its work with individual families at an operational level and this informs how help and protection are provided.</li> <li>• Quality assurance work across all services within CFS contributes to an approach whereby themes regarding children and young people's experiences are identified and responded to at a strategic, whole-system level</li> <li>• CFS' new Family Group Decision Making Team alongside CFS' Children's Rights Officer Team and Corporate Parenting Service will lead on gathering, recording and conveying to strategic leadership the views and experiences of children and young people supported by Family Group Conferences, child protection plans and/or who become Looked After; where domestic abuse has been a factor in children's lives this will be an area that is explored.</li> </ul>
<p>11 - Commission community-based therapeutic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DAIS will continue to provide therapeutic group-based interventions to victims and survivors of domestic abuse</li> </ul>

<p>support for child victims in the borough, including one-to-one and group-based therapeutic support for children and young people themselves, in addition to support for their non-offending parent as a means of addressing the impact of domestic abuse on their relationship.</p>	<p>in Financial Year 2026/27, as budget permits.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Regarding individual therapeutic interventions for child victims of domestic abuse, services that form the City and Hackney CAMHS Alliance will continue to assess and address trauma and its associated effects as part of their core offer</li> <li>● From May 2026 Woman’s Trust, a local 3rd sector agency, will be offering group interventions for women and their children harmed through domestic abuse; details and referral pathways will be promoted by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Service</li> <li>● As part of the newly developing Children and Family Hub Parenting Plus, we will explore evidence-based interventions for children impacted by domestic abuse.</li> <li>● Parents have access to housing and legal advice regarding Child Law through the commissioned services in the Children and Family Hub. The family Financial Resilience Programme works with families with children aged 0 to 19, and up to 25 for those with SEND.</li> </ul>
<p>12 - Set out how it will improve joint working between the VAWG and mental health sectors to enable practitioners to make better assessments and referrals, for pathways and services to be easier to navigate for professionals and victims / survivors themselves and to ensure that those experiencing mental health problems are not ‘bounced around’ different services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● DAIS work closely with East London Foundation Trust (ELFT), Adult Social Care, Turning Point and NHS colleagues both operationally and strategically to ensure that victims/survivors with needs relating to trauma, mental health, substance misuse and/or learning needs receive a timely and effective joined-up intervention</li> <li>● DAIS has recently simplified Hackney’s local referral forms and pathways for domestic abuse and sexual exploitation to make it as easy as possible for partner agencies to identify abuse and refer victims/survivors for support</li> <li>● DAIS provides regular training to staff across ELFT around a range of issues relating to domestic abuse and VAWG</li> <li>● ELFT have introduced mandatory routine enquiry regarding domestic abuse across its workforce; this is improving practitioners’ recognition of and response to domestic abuse.</li> </ul>
<p>Holding perpetrators to account and reducing harm</p>	
<p>13 - Set out how new and existing technologies are currently being or will be harnessed by police, the CPS and CJS agencies locally to identify and pursue perpetrators of VAWG, such as live facial recognition, rapid video response model and electronic monitoring.</p>	<p><u>City and Hackney Probation Service</u></p> <p>As noted in the recommendation, GPS tagging is already used to support the monitoring and management of perpetrators in the community. Probation practitioners use the Effective Proposal Framework (EPF) tool both pre- and post-sentence as a structured aid to risk assessment and decision-making, helping to identify the most appropriate options to manage risk and support rehabilitation. EPF supports practitioners to consider relevant factors consistently, evidence the rationale for decisions, and inform the selection of necessary and proportionate licence and community order requirements/conditions (including</p>

electronic monitoring where appropriate). Used alongside professional judgement, it helps ensure that controls are targeted, defensible and proportionate, strengthening risk management in the community while reducing the likelihood of unnecessary restrictions.

#### Metropolitan Police Service

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), in partnership with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and wider Criminal Justice System (CJS) agencies, is increasingly harnessing both new and existing technologies to strengthen the identification, investigation and prosecution of perpetrators of violence against women and girls (VAWG). Within Public Protection and specialist domestic abuse investigation units, technology is a critical enabler of earlier intervention, improved safeguarding and stronger criminal justice outcomes.

#### *Identification and Enforcement*

Emerging technologies are supporting the proactive identification and location of high-risk perpetrators. Where lawfully deployed and subject to robust governance, Live Facial Recognition (LFR) assists in identifying wanted offenders, including those subject to arrest warrants, bail conditions or protective orders linked to domestic abuse and other VAWG offences. This is supported by enhanced use of national and local intelligence systems, enabling the identification of serial and repeat perpetrators across borough and force boundaries.

#### *Victim Engagement and Evidence Capture*

Digital innovation is improving early engagement with victims and the quality of evidential material gathered. The Rapid Video Response (RVR) model allows officers to conduct timely initial engagement, risk assessment and safeguarding where immediate attendance is not possible, helping to preserve evidence, provide reassurance and maintain victim confidence.

Further, the use of digital evidence capture, body-worn video and secure online evidence portals enables victims to submit material such as messages, images and call data safely and efficiently. This approach is particularly effective in building evidence-led cases involving coercive and controlling behaviour, reducing reliance on victim testimony and supporting prosecutions even where victims disengage.

#### *Monitoring and Management of Perpetrators*

Technology plays a vital role in managing perpetrators subject to court or licence conditions. Electronic monitoring,

	<p>including GPS tagging and exclusion zones, is used to enforce bail, restraining orders and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders. This provides real-time oversight of compliance, supports swift enforcement where breaches occur, and strengthens victim safety through deterrence and accountability.</p> <p>Multi-agency risk management processes, including MARAC, are increasingly supported by secure digital information-sharing platforms, enabling timely and lawful sharing of intelligence between police, probation, courts, health, housing and specialist support services.</p> <p><i>Criminal Justice Outcomes and Future Development</i></p> <p>The CPS and courts benefit from improved digital case file management, disclosure processes and remote court capabilities, reducing delays and supporting more effective charging and case progression in domestic abuse and VAWG cases.</p> <p>Looking ahead, the MPS continues to explore innovation that enhances perpetrator management and victim safeguarding while maintaining ethical, proportionate and transparent use of technology.</p> <p>All deployments are underpinned by strong governance, data protection, equality considerations and a trauma-informed approach.</p> <p>Collectively, these technologies support a system-wide ambition to prevent harm, pursue perpetrators and protect women and girls.</p> <p><u>Crown Prosecution Service</u></p> <p>The CPS have explained that they are not involved in the identification and pursuit of perpetrators of VAWG; this responsibility lies with the police.</p>
<p>14 - Develop an action plan setting out how victims / survivors will be provided with more frequent, better communication from the police, the CPS and CJS agencies to ensure victims / survivors feel informed and cared for throughout their journey through the justice system and reduce attrition rates.</p>	<p><u>City and Hackney Probation Service</u></p> <p>Within the scope of our remit, Victim Liaison Officers and Domestic Abuse Safety Officers will continue to be allocated to eligible victims only. However, the strength of our partnership working across the Criminal Justice System is central to improving the experience of all victims and survivors. Probation will continue to work closely with partner agencies to share timely information, coordinate a joined-up response, and contribute to clearer, more consistent communication, so that victims and survivors feel informed and supported throughout their journey through the justice system, with the aim of reducing risk and attrition.</p>

## Metropolitan Police Service

### *Objective*

To ensure victims and survivors of domestic abuse and VAWG receive frequent, consistent and trauma-informed communication throughout the criminal justice process, increasing confidence, improving care and reducing victim attrition, in line with the Victims' Code and MPS VAWG priorities.

### *Key Actions and Delivery*

#### 1. Priority Victim Status Embedded

All domestic abuse and VAWG victims will be assessed and recorded as Priority Victims at first contact.

Priority status will be clearly flagged on police systems, triggering enhanced updates, safeguarding focus and supervisory oversight.

Victims will be proactively informed of their Priority Victim entitlements and what this means in practice.

Outcome: Victims understand their rights and feel recognised, valued and supported.

#### 2. Clear Communication Standards

An agreed Victim Communication Plan will be established early, reflecting victim preference, safety considerations and frequency of contact.

Priority Victims will receive updates at all key stages (arrest, bail, CPS decisions, charge, court progression), including when there is no substantive case movement.

Outcome: Reduced uncertainty and anxiety; improved trust and transparency.

#### 3. Supervisory Oversight and Accountability

Supervisors will routinely review victim contact records for Priority Victims.

Delays or gaps in communication will be identified early and addressed.

Communication quality will be assessed as part of investigative supervision.

Outcome: Consistent standards and accountability across Public Protection teams.

#### 4. Digital and Innovative Engagement

Use of Rapid Video Response (RVR) and digital contact methods where appropriate to maintain timely engagement. Secure digital evidence tools utilised with clear explanations to victims about process and use.

	<p>Text or email updates used safely to support regular contact. Outcome: Flexible, responsive communication that meets individual victim needs.</p> <p>5. Trauma-Informed Communication</p> <p>Officers trained to explain investigative and CPS decisions in clear, compassionate and accessible language. Victims supported to understand court processes, timelines and potential outcomes. Outcome: Victims feel informed and respected, reducing disengagement.</p> <p>6. Partnership Support and Continuity</p> <p>Early referral to IDVAs and specialist VAWG services, with consent. Regular reminders to victims about available support at key investigation stages. Joined-up messaging with partners to reinforce engagement. Outcome: Increased resilience and confidence to remain engaged in proceedings.</p> <p>7. Monitoring and Continuous Improvement</p> <p>Attrition points and Priority Victim feedback regularly reviewed at unit level. Learning shared through governance structures to inform continuous improvement. Outcome: Data-led improvements and demonstrable impact on victim experience.</p> <p><i>Strategic Impact</i></p> <p>This action plan ensures that Priority Victims of domestic abuse and VAWG are kept informed, treated with care and supported throughout the justice journey, improving victim confidence, strengthening criminal justice outcomes and reducing attrition across Public Protection investigations.</p> <p><u>Crown Prosecution Service</u></p> <p>Nationally, the CPS has a Victims' Programme that is looking at the best methods of communicating with victims at the various stages of the prosecution process. More details can be found in the link below:</p> <p><a href="#">Victims Programme   The Crown Prosecution Service</a></p>
15 - Provide an update on Hackney's allocation of increased	City and Hackney Probation Service have confirmed that discussions on this issue are ongoing; they will provide a full

funding from central government for probation and community support services, and sets out how it will be utilised locally to improve partnership working with statutory agencies and the third sector to ensure offenders are closely tracked, supported and managed effectively.

and comprehensive update to Hackney's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Board once able to do so

Yours sincerely



**Cllr Susan Fajana-Thomas OBE**

Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Regulatory Services



**Diane Benjamin**

Director of Children & Families Service and VAWG Strategic Board Chair