



**London Borough
of Hounslow**

HOUNSLOW VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS PLAN

2023 - 2026

Hounslow Safer Communities:

Working with communities to keep Hounslow a low crime borough and a safe place to live, work, study and visit

INTRODUCTION

Violence Against Women and Girls is unacceptable; that is why it forms part of Hounslow's ambitious Corporate Plan which includes 'A Safer Hounslow'. At least two women are murdered each week across England and Wales because of domestic abuse, and thousands more have experienced some form of violence, abuse, or harassment in their lives. However, we know that anything is possible to keep women and girls safe in Hounslow. We understand the lasting effects that Violence Against Women and Girls can have on individuals and their families; how some victims face more challenges than others because of who they are, how public confidence in the criminal justice system is low, and how fear of male violence still pervades a simple action such as walking home at night.

We want to lead with the heart to make sure all women and girls feel safe in their homes, open spaces, and venues across Hounslow. Firstly, we have decided to take a gendered approach in this plan. Whilst we know that men and boys can be victims of female violence, statistics and other types of evidence show that women and girls are overwhelmingly targeted by men and boys in terms of both level and severity of the violence, abuse, and harassment used. Secondly, we also know that members of our Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender and Queer + community, women with learning and physical disabilities, and migrant women are just as likely to be affected by Violence Against Women and Girls. We want to help all our communities.

We need to understand what drives attitudes and behaviours that dehumanizes and objectifies women and girls as second-class citizens in our society. Against the backdrop of the pandemic, Covid-19 has

highlighted how prevalent abuse and violence against women and girls continues to be. From the appalling murders of Sarah Everard and Sabina Nessa in London in 2021 to the tragic deaths in Hounslow of Poorna Sivraj and her son in 2020, and Mayra Zulfiqar in 2021, a local Hounslow student murdered in Pakistan for rejecting a marriage proposal, it is very clear that Violence Against Women and Girls is not just a national issue. It is a local one too.

One of the ways to improve national and local response to Violence Against Women and Girls is the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. This groundbreaking piece of legislation has set the stage to reinforce support and protection for victims and children affected by domestic abuse.

We need to challenge male violence at every level from misogynist language to unacceptable attitudes and behaviours by men. We need to change the way we treat women and girls. It is essential that we tackle low confidence issues in the Police in order that women and girls are encouraged to report. But we do need men and boys to be part of this effort - we need to encourage men and boys in our communities to become allies, to speak out and get involved, so that we can help to create a future in which women and girls feel safe in their communities. Hounslow is a White Ribbon Town, and we are therefore committed to signing the pledge to encourage ALL men and boys to call out and speak up to prevent violence and abuse against women and girls.

“Harming women is a choice that some men make. There are no excuses.”

Anonymous, female Hounslow resident

This plan has not been developed on its own. It is informed and shaped by the work already happening to make London a safer place for women and girls (see Diagram 1).

To develop this plan, we have listened to and considered the everyday experiences, stories and suggestions from survivors, residents, and all the staff who work tirelessly day in and day out to make sure victims are supported. Feedback has been invaluable because it has helped us to identify the priorities for this plan over the next three years.



Diagram 1:

National and Regional Violence Against Women and Girls Strategies



OUR PRIORITIES



PRIORITY 1:

Victims, survivors and children receive the right help

PRIORITY 2:

Work together to stop Violence Against Women and Girls

PRIORITY 3:

Taking action against perpetrators



OUR FOCUS

PRIORITY 1:

Victims, survivors and children receive the right help

THIS MEANS:

Getting support and advice should be fair for everyone, easy to access and tailored according to a person's need for example, single sex services. We want all victims and survivors to feel that when they access services that they are being listened to, respected, and valued.

WE WILL CHECK WE'RE ON TRACK BY:

- ✓ Improving how we support those affected by violence against women and girls
- ✓ Improving access to specialist support for children affected by domestic abuse
- ✓ Improving the identification and positive outcomes for women and girls who are at risk of sexual exploitation

PRIORITY 2:

Work together to stop Violence Against Women and Girls

THIS MEANS:

We want to make Hounslow a safe place for women and girls. We will do this by working together to empower and educate children and young people.

WE WILL CHECK WE'RE ON TRACK BY:

- ✓ Increasing the number of men and boys who engage and support the Violence Against Women and Girls Plan
- ✓ Increasing the number of venues that are trained to recognise, handle and report abuse and harassment
- ✓ Improving children's and young people's understanding of what healthy relationships, consent and respect looks like

PRIORITY 3:

Taking action against perpetrators

THIS MEANS:

We want to take action against perpetrators so that they are held responsible for their behaviours.

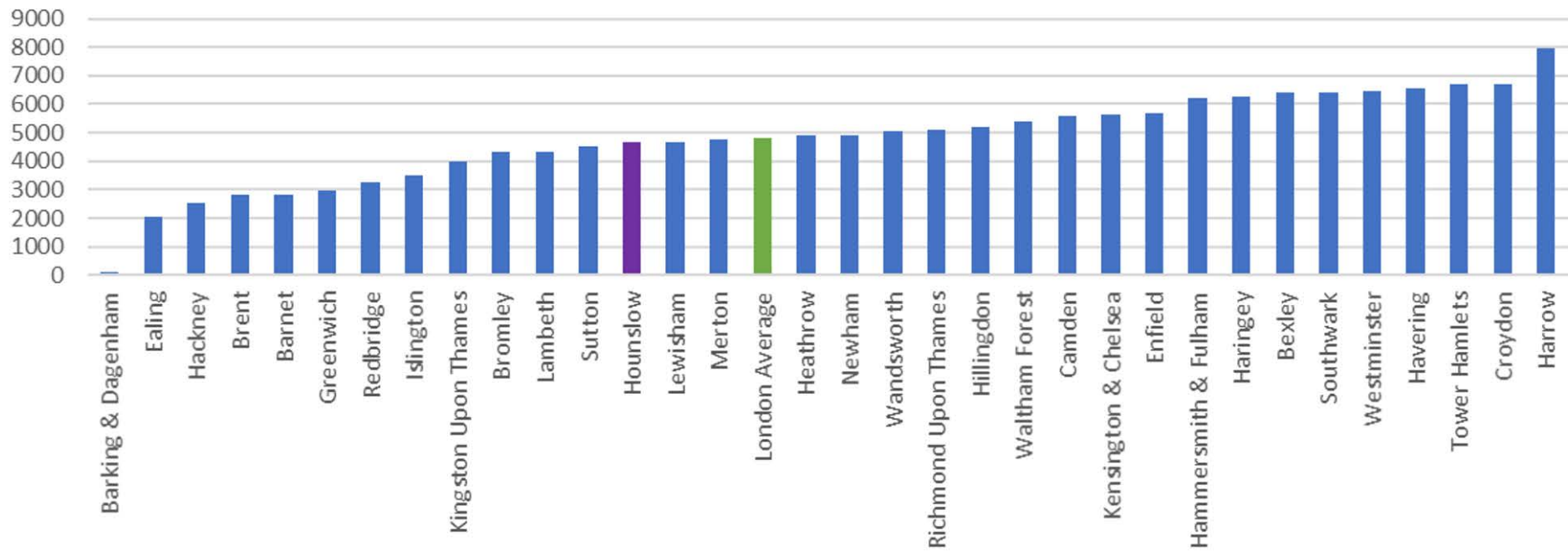
WE WILL CHECK WE'RE ON TRACK BY:

- ✓ Improving the effectiveness of protection measures available to women and girls
- ✓ Increasing the number of domestic abuse perpetrators who change their harmful behaviours
- ✓ Increasing the number of women and girls who feel safe in public spaces

BOROUGH CRIME LEVELS

Metropolitan Police Service data showing total figures for domestic abuse, rape, indecent exposure, revenge porn, stalking, honour-based violence and female genital mutilation.

Total Notifiable Offences: Violence Against Women and Girls
September 2021 to August 2022



OUR AMBITION

A Safer Hounslow to live, work, study and visit

We are an outstanding council committed to and proudly serving an outstanding borough. This is all due to the many organisations, community groups and residents who work tirelessly with each other every day, to deliver services and programmes to keep women and girls safe. They provide help and support to victims of violence and abuse, provide education to children about respect for others, and deliver programmes to help and support perpetrators to change their behaviours.

We want to build on our successful work so far and keep on doing new. We want to improve the services that victims and survivors rely on, we want to address the issue of inequality experienced by some victims who face many barriers in accessing services and, more importantly, make sure that perpetrators continue to be held accountable for their actions.

As set out in our Safer Communities Strategy 2021-2024, our approach to making Hounslow a safer place for women and girls will form part of our most ambitious plans to date.



We have listened to survivors, talked to frontline professionals and community groups before we agreed on the priorities. These priorities, however, will change over the life of the strategy as we progress with the Council's ambitious plans for Hounslow.

We want to help women and girls before they reach a crisis point and seek help from services. To do this, we will focus on putting in place a preventative and early intervention approach across Hounslow.

This plan will support the Council's vision to continue to be an outstanding borough, through its One Hounslow Programme. We want to make 'real life' improvements to our services and programmes to make sure we are doing better locally to ensure victims, survivors, and children are getting the help that they need.

As Hounslow Council's plan sets out, we will explore new ways of working, we will work alongside with and listen to residents and communities to ensure that every victim and survivor is safe and supported in order to achieve our ambitions.

OUR APPROACH

To achieve our ambition, we will adopt a preventative approach based on a Coordinated Community Response.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO YOU:

To deliver on this approach, we will work together with our partners. This means that victims and survivors are able to access the help that they need whatever agency they approach. This is called a Coordinated Community Response.

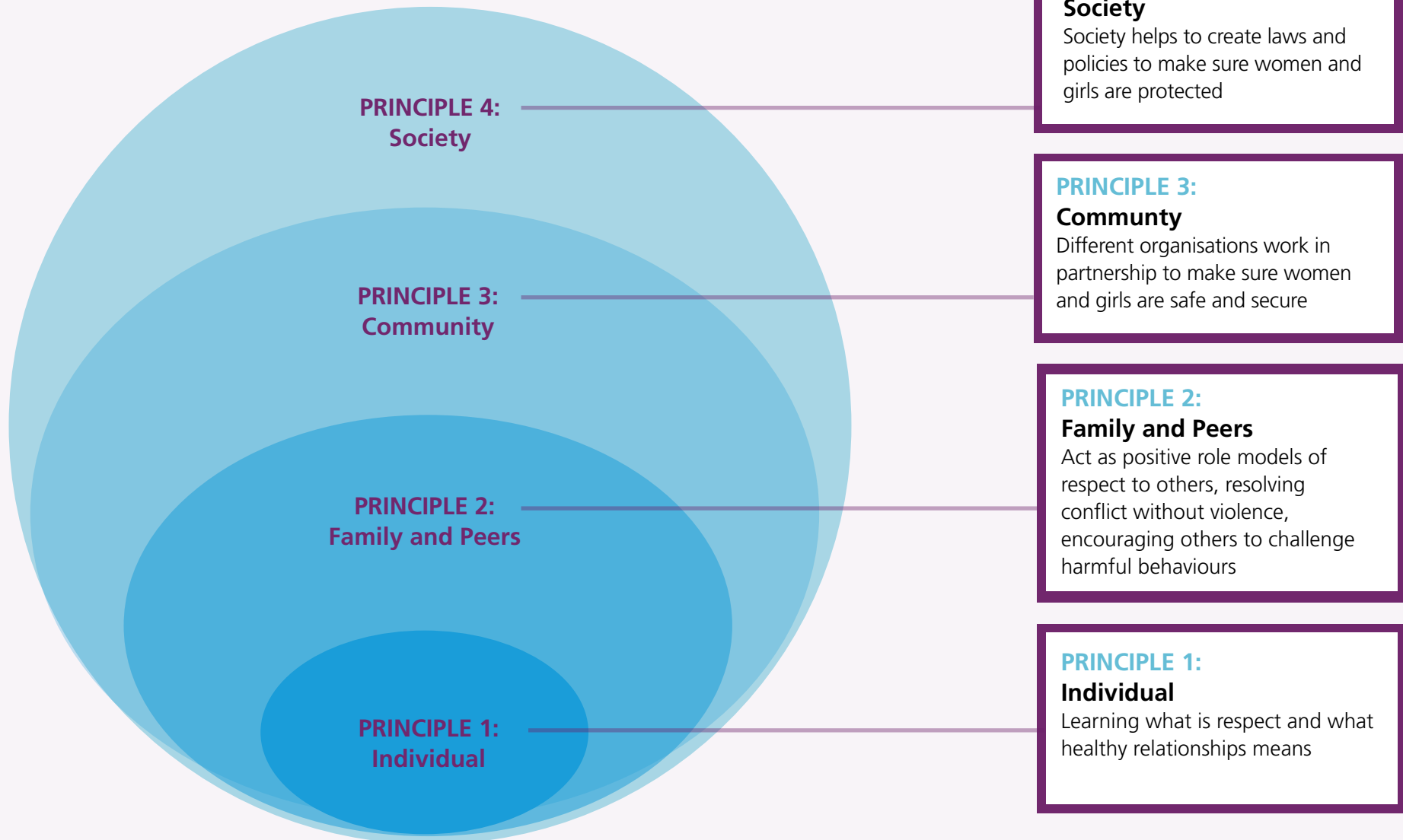
This approach moves the responsibility of safety from victims and survivors to the community and services in the borough. It is then the obligation of every organisation that provides support to victims and survivors, to work together to ensure their security and safety. It is important that we all share the same vision in making Hounslow a safer place.

We know that some residents face more barriers to accessing services or to report because of their race, gender, age, disability or sexuality. We will work with everyone because everyone is entitled to feel safe whether at home or in public space.

To help us deliver this approach, we will work with the Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership who will focus on supporting the Coordinated Community Response approach of this plan. The Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership is made up of statutory organisations, as well as community and voluntary organisations who are local to the borough. We will work together to ensure that everyone receives the help that they need, that we help to create a community in which there is zero tolerance to violence and abuse, and a place where perpetrators are held accountable for their actions.



To reduce violence against women and girls, we will adopt an ecological model as our guiding principles. This model recognises the importance of the community working together to make Hounslow a safe space for women and girls.



HOW WE WILL DELIVER ON OUR PRIORITIES

The Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership, which is made up of key organisations in the borough, will work together to ensure that our priorities are being delivered to residents. The Partnership will report to the Hounslow Community Safety Partnership Board.

In addition to this plan, there are other strategies and plans that set out how we will all work together to make sure Hounslow is safe and secure for women and girls. These are set out in the Hounslow Council's Corporate Plan 2022-2026 and the Safer Communities Strategy 2021-2024.



APPENDIX 1

YEAR 1 DELIVERY PLAN 2022-2025

(Year 2 and 3 Delivery plans will be developed at the end of Year 1)

PRIORITY 1: Victims, survivors and children receive the right help	
WE WILL CHECK WE'RE ON TRACK BY:	WHAT WE WILL DO:
Improving how we support those affected by violence against women and girls.	Explore a follow on group for mothers who have completed a therapeutic programme for non-abusing parents affected by domestic abuse. This programme will seek to reduce isolation, as well as equip and empower women to lead independent lives.
Improving access to specialist support for children affected by domestic abuse	Explore how to further develop the Council's successful 12-week domestic abuse Let's Talk group work programme for children, and mothers where English is not their first language.
Improving the identification and positive outcomes for women and girls who are at risk of sexual violence and exploitation.	Sexual Violence Prevention worker to encourage referrals from adult survivors of historic child sexual abuse. In addition to this, implement two outreach sessions within the borough.
	Hounslow Council to use regular feedback from young women attending a local girls group. The feedback will be used to improve outcomes for young women at risk of child sexual exploitation.

PRIORITY 2: Work together to stop Violence Against Women and Girls

WE WILL CHECK WE'RE ON TRACK BY:	WHAT WE WILL DO:
Increasing the number of men and boys to become positive models to stand out and speak up against male violence, abuse and harassment.	To successfully implement year one of the national White Ribbon accreditation programme. This programme is aimed at changing social attitudes and behaviours that contribute to violence against women and girls.
Increasing the number of venues that are trained to recognise, handle and report abuse and harassment.	Develop a pilot project to support local business venues to train staff to identify and respond to sexual harassment of women and girls.
	To explore the introduction of the Ask Angela campaign in licensed venues in the borough, through communications and licence applications. The campaign is codeword that discreetly indicates to staff that they need support.
Improving children and young people's understanding of what healthy relationships, consent and respect looks like.	Create opportunities for children and young people to provide feedback on our successful domestic violence prevention programme delivered in schools.
Strengthen the way Hounslow Council and the Police work together to tackle violence against women and girls.	The Council will play a key role in West Area Basic Command Unit's Trust and Confidence Working Group to address violence against women and girls.

PRIORITY 3: Taking action against perpetrators

WE WILL CHECK WE'RE ON TRACK BY:	WHAT WE WILL DO:
Improving the effectiveness of protection measures to keep women and girls safe	The Police to carry out an evaluation of protective measures to increase number of applications.
Increasing the number of domestic abuse perpetrators who change their harmful behaviours.	The Police and Hounslow Council to work in partnership to explore how to engage domestic abuse perpetrators in custody to encourage them to change their offending behaviour.
Increasing the number of women and girls who feel safe in public spaces.	Hounslow Council to explore improvements to local areas where there is evidence that women and girls feel unsafe.