

Delivering Lambeth's Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy 2011-2014

Lambeth VAWG Centre- the Gaia Centre

Background

In 2011 Safer Lambeth produced its first integrated Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)¹ Strategy which supports the Home Office vision as set out in the document 'Call to End Violence against Women and Girls' published in November 2010.

The principles of this 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 Safer Lambeth VAWG Strategy was developed using the latest figures relating to prevalence of VAWG in Lambeth, a detailed research study and an innovative customer insight report exploring the views of victim-survivors in the borough.

This work informed us that while our existing services deliver quality support and advice in some areas, notably domestic violence, we need to do more to address all strands of VAWG and the relationship between them, to better coordinate our services and to react to a world of rapidly changing technology and attitudes.

In order to respond to this, the VAWG Strategy details a whole range of activities designed to ensure that we can be confident that Lambeth is a position to both prevent and respond to VAWG effectively. This includes the re-commissioning of the Gaia Centre in order to increase its capacity and to re-focus its approach towards all strands of VAWG rather than just domestic violence, as historically has been the case.

Commissioning Process

In order to ensure that the new Gaia Centre would be in a position to deliver a truly seamless VAWG service we brought together a range of funding streams from the Home Office, London Borough of Lambeth and Lambeth First (Local Strategic Partnership) with the aim of using this "joint pot" to commission one service model. We 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.

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. This service will 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

¹ There are 8 strands that make up the VAWG agenda: domestic violence, sexual violence, stalking, trafficking, prostitution, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage and crimes said to be committed in the name of 'honour.'

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.

Following an open tender process Refuge was awarded the contract to run the service. Refuge is now the UK's largest provider of specialist domestic violence services (supporting 1,600 women and their children on any given day) and the leading voice in the campaign to end abuse.

The Service- The Gaia Centre

The new and innovative service, which will continue to go by the name of the Gaia Centre, went live on 16 January 2012. It will soon move to brand new expanded premises to allow all the staff to be co-located in order to provide a fully integrated One-Stop Shop response to VAWG in Lambeth.

The Gaia Centre will work with females aged 14+ and will provide a specialist support around all forms of gender based violence. There will also be provision for male victims aged 18+. (please note that the Gaia Centre does not provide accommodation based services, this element is delivered by the Lambeth commissioned refuge providers).

The new service will include the following provision:

- Independent Gender Violence Advocates (IGVAs)
- Community Outreach Workers
- Peer support and volunteer scheme
- Early intervention worker (14-16 years), including Female Genital Mutilation outreach
- Sanctuary Scheme (housing target hardening, safe room etc)
- Counselling
- Crèche facilities

This new model of delivery will mean that all victims of VAWG access the Gaia Centre as a first point of contact, and the Gaia Centre will either deliver the specialist VAWG support or triage victims into the most appropriate service(s) in the borough based on the needs of the victim.

The service will also have a strong preventative element. Through outreach, awareness raising and advocacy the Gaia Centre will work with the Council and other partners to train and equip staff to respond effectively to issues of VAWG using a coordinated response.

Further information

As previously mentioned the new service went live on 16 January 2012 and will be developing over the coming months. We are working with Refuge to produce a joint communications plan and will endeavour to keep partners updated on Gaia service development.

In relation to contacting the Gaia Centre team and making referrals to the Centre please phone 0207 733 8724 (this number has not changed) or email lambethvawg@refuge.org.uk.

If you would like further information about Gaia please Contact:

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If you would like further information about VAWG please contact:

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