

London Borough of Waltham Forest

Report Title Safe and Together London Partnership 2026 – 2028

Meeting / Date Cabinet, 14 July 2026

Cabinet portfolio Councillor Daisy Richards,
Portfolio Lead for Children
and Young People



Councillor Charlotte
Lafferty, Portfolio Lead
Member for Community
Safety



Report author/
Contact details Georgia Johnson, Senior VAWG Practitioner

Violence Against Women and Girls Team

Children's Services

Georgia.Johnson@walthamforest.gov.uk

Wards affected All wards

Public access Open

Appendices Appendix 1 - Equalities Screener

Summary

- 1.1 Approval to remain the lead borough and grant recipient for the Safe and Together London Partnership as it expands across fourteen London boroughs (2026 – 2028).
- 1.2 Safe & Together is a child-centred model for supporting families impacted by domestic abuse. It is based on the principle that children and young people are best served when we can work toward keeping them safe and together with the non-offending parent. The model is a perpetrator-focused approach which incorporates survivor strengths when working with domestic abuse cases. It aims to support staff across children's services to make good decisions for children impacted by domestic abuse perpetrators. The Safe & Together model consists of a set of assumptions, principles, and critical components that when utilised in domestic abuse cases, help improve identification, assessment, documentation, case-planning and decision-making. The model is then delivered through training and tools to multi agency practitioners and supporting professionals to 'pivot to the perpetrator' by partnering with the survivor and holding perpetrators accountable in domestic abuse cases.
- 1.3 As the lead borough, we are the budget holders for the London Partnership, receiving £1,033,000 in funding from the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and Foundations over two years.

Waltham Forest is entitled to claim £115,000 over two years for project management costs. The remaining funding will be paid to our delivery partners: 1) Respect and 2) London Metropolitan University's Child and Women Abuse Studies Unit.

2. **Recommendations**

2.1 Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1.1 Approve the Safe and Together proposal for 2026 – 2028 and approve the project commencing immediately so that we can proceed with mobilising the London partnership across the new sites (boroughs TBC).
- 2.1.2 Approve the acceptance of £1,033,000 external grant funding from MOPAC and Foundations for the delivery of the Safe and Together London Partnership from 2026 – 2028.
- 2.1.3 Approve Waltham Forest acting as the lead grant recipient and accountable body
- 2.1.4 Approve the commissioning of Respect and Child and Women Abuse Studies Unit (CWASU) as delivery partners in accordance with the grant conditions.
- 2.1.5 Delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Lead Member for Children and Young People, and the Portfolio Lead Member for Community Safety, to accept the Safe and Together London Partnership grant from MOPAC on behalf of the Council, and to allocate the funding to the VAWG team to continue the rollout of the Safe and Together model across Waltham Forest Children's Services.

3. **Proposals**

- 3.1 Domestic abuse is a key factor in child safeguarding concerns. The [Domestic Abuse Commissioner's Report](#) (2025) identified domestic abuse in 47% of Serious Incident Notifications, Rapid Reviews, and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews between 2023–2024, increasing to 52% in cases where a child died. The report highlights the Safe and Together model as best practice in responding to domestic abuse within children's services.
- 3.2 The council is committed to strengthening its response to domestic abuse and improving outcomes for children and families affected by violence against women and girls (VAWG). The Safe & Together model is an internationally recognised, evidence-based framework that supports practitioners to keep children safe by partnering with non-abusive parents and holding perpetrators accountable. Embedding this model across Children's Services is a key part of the borough's approach to improving practice, reducing harm, and ensuring consistent, trauma-informed responses. Waltham Forest has been embedding the Safe and Together approach since 2019, initially

funded by the Home Office and subsequently by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) from 2023. Under the most recent grant (2025 - 2026), the programme has been delivered across six London boroughs.

- 3.3 A new funding opportunity has been secured from MOPAC, co-funded by Foundations, to expand the programme across fourteen boroughs between 2026 - 2028. This includes the delivery of a Randomised Control Trial (RCT) in seven boroughs to strengthen the national evidence base for domestic abuse interventions.
- 3.4 This report seeks approval to accept and administer this funding and continue Waltham Forest's role as the lead accountable body. Acceptance of the grant requires a formal decision of Cabinet, along with approval for delegated authority to enable timely implementation. The funding will support workforce development, training, practice leadership, and alignment with existing safeguarding processes.
- 3.5 The programme delivers a proven and recognised model of best practice that:
 - Improves risk identification and case management for domestic abuse cases
 - Supports multi-agency working
 - Embeds a perpetrator-focused approach
 - Strengthens outcomes for children and non-abusive parents
- 3.6 The expansion to fourteen boroughs will:
 - Increase system-wide impact across London
 - Support consistency in domestic abuse practice
 - Generate robust evidence through the Randomised Control Trial
- 3.7 The proposal represents strong value for money as:
 - The project is externally funded by MOPAC and Foundations, with a matched funding contribution requirement of £28,000 in Year 1 and £29,000 in Year 2 for Waltham Forest. This means that Waltham Forest receives extensive training and a 0.5 FTE Respect Safe and Together Implementation Lead* at a grant-subsidised cost, without placing pressure on council core budgets.
 - The Safe and Together approach focuses on keeping children safe with non-abusing parents, reducing costly looked after children (LAC) placements and repeat CSC interventions.
 - The project leverages significant regional scale and collaboration, increasing impact per pound spent.
 - The inclusion of an RCT ensures long-term value through evidence generation and future funding opportunities.
- 3.8 *The Implementation Leads will cover:

- Recruitment for, organisation of, and delivery of 25 4-day Core training places per borough per year, and up to 40 Overview places per borough per year.
- Monthly half-day workshops, facilitated by the Implementation Leads, on the topics of 'Intervening with Perpetrators'; 'Domestic Abuse Informed Documentation'; 'Intersections and Intersectionalities'; and 'Perpetrator Coercive Control and Systems Manipulation'
- Deliver frequent briefings and tailored workshops to teams across CSC.
- Offer 1-1 case consultations to help embed learning into practice.
- Supporting local authority CSC departments with the implementation of domestic abuse informed practice in the context of the Social Care Reforms.
- Available to facilitate group supervision sessions focusing on DA cases.
- Complete learning reviews across CSC to identify areas of practice where additional support is needed, and to monitor uptake of the model.
- Ongoing support and partnership for S&T borough leads, in line with the borough's strategic aims around VAWG.
- Build the network of Safe & Together Champions for the purpose of sustainability after the period of Implementation ends.
- Prioritise any strategic/procedural/process/systems pieces of work linked to embedding the model and improving DA practice across CSC. Previous examples of this have been targeted pieces of work with Complaints teams, Family Group Conference leads, Child Protection Conference Chairs, or MASH practitioners.

3.9 Please note that the grant is ringfenced and conditional. It must be used to commission Respect and CWASU. If Cabinet approval is not secured:

- The funding cannot be accessed
- The programme cannot continue
- Payments for ongoing mobilisation work cannot legally be made

4. **Options & Alternatives Considered**

4.1 Option 1: Approve the proposal (recommended)

Accept the grant funding and continue delivery of the Safe and Together London Partnership.

Benefits:

- Secures over £1m of external funding
- Maintains Waltham Forest's leadership role
- Improves outcomes for children affected by domestic abuse
- Strengthens partnership working across London

Option 2: Do not approve the proposal (not recommended)

Risks:

- Potential loss of £1,033,000 external funding if the Partnership is unable to find another lead borough
- Disruption to programme as project management is transferred to another local authority
- Guaranteed loss of £115,000 towards Project Management roles for Waltham Forest
- Delays to payment for delivery partners during mobilisation period, as project management is transferred
- Reputational risk with MOPAC, Foundations, and partner boroughs
- Loss of opportunity to participate in a pan-London transformation programme
- Reduced capacity to improve domestic abuse practice locally and regionally

4.2 No alternative delivery models are viable as the grant conditions require commissioning of Respect and CWASU. The recommended option is therefore to approve the proposal.

5. **Council Strategic Priorities (and other National or Local Policies or Strategies)**

5.1 Strategic Alignment

The proposals directly support the Council's strategic priorities, including:

- a) Keeping children and young people safe
 - Strengthens safeguarding practice in domestic abuse cases
 - Improves outcomes for vulnerable children
 - Aligns with Mission Waltham Forest: 'Ensure every family and every child are given every opportunity', using a strengths-based and partnership-based approach towards independence, building on their strengths.
- b) Tackling violence against women and girls
 - Embeds a perpetrator-focused approach
 - Supports survivors and reduces harm
 - Aligns with Mission Waltham Forest: 'Make Waltham Forest a great place to live'
- c) Early intervention and prevention

- The focus on early intervention is highly compatible with the Children's Social Care reforms.
 - The model promotes a partnership approach to safeguarding; making safeguarding a responsibility that everyone shares (e.g., by offering overview domestic abuse training to external agencies working with families experiencing DA)
- d) Partnership working and system leadership
- Enhances collaboration across London boroughs
 - Positions Waltham Forest Council as a regional leader in best practice
- 5.2 The programme also supports national policy priorities on domestic abuse and safeguarding, and contributes to the development of an evidence base through the RCT.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 In 2019, an evaluation of local context and a briefing paper was shared with the Children's Health and Wellbeing Sub Committee ahead of initial implementation. Over the last six years of implementing Safe and Together, the project has continued to evolve to meet the local context.
- 6.2 The development of the Safe and Together London Partnership has involved ongoing engagement with:
- MOPAC (funder and strategic oversight)
 - Foundations (co-funder and evaluation partner)
 - Cordis Bright (evaluation partner)
 - Respect (delivery partner)
 - Child and Women Abuse Studies Unit at London Metropolitan
 - Participating London boroughs
- 6.3 The Child and Women Abuse Studies Unit have produced [three reports](#) since 2022 evaluating the progress and benefits of implementation across the London Partnership. Their feedback has informed the programme design and piqued the interest of larger funders like Foundations, who have since co-funded the expansion of the model with MOPAC, alongside the inclusion of an RCT.
- 6.4 A formal public consultation has not been required because this report relates to the acceptance of external funding, and the continuation of an existing evidence-based programme.
- 6.5 The Communities and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee will continue to receive regular updates on the progress of the Partnership.

7. Implications

7.1 Finance, Value for Money and Risk

7.1.1 The total value of the grant is up to £1,033,000 over two years (2026 - 2028), including £26,000 contingency funding.

7.1.2 Waltham Forest will retain:

- £56,650 in Year 1
- £58,350 in Year 2

Remaining funds will be distributed to Respect and CWASU.

7.1.3 There is also a required matched funding contribution for each local authority involved in the London Partnership. This is paid directly to Respect UK, as our primary delivery partner, and contributes towards salaries for Implementation Leads, and training costs. For boroughs not in the RCT, the matched funding contribution is £28,000 in Year 1 and £29,000 in Year 2. For boroughs in the RCT, the matched funding contribution is £16,000 per year, as some of those boroughs will not receive implementation.

7.1.4 This matched funding contribution is built into the existing VAWG service budget and offset by the project management income of £115,000. This arrangement has been in place for the duration of the partnership and therefore does not create a new pressure as it is offset by project management income.

Funding category	Year 1	Year 2	Total
Waltham Forest project management	£56,650	£58,350	£115,000
Respect	£421,000	£421,000	£842,000
CWASU	£25,000	£25,000	£50,000
Contingency	£26,000	£0	£26,000
Total	£528,650	£504,350	£1,033,000

7.1.5 Payment Schedule

7.1.6 Robust grant management and monitoring arrangements will be in place. The 2026 – 2028 payment schedule dates have not yet been confirmed, but the payment schedule will operate as follows:

- At the beginning of the financial year, MOPAC will raise a purchase order for Waltham Forest for the total forecasted budget

- At the beginning of the funding period, Waltham Forest will raise two purchase orders for the total forecasted budget for CWASU and Respect
- At the end of every quarter, Waltham Forest will receive financial monitoring returns from Respect and CWASU
- At the end of every quarter, Waltham Forest will submit financial monitoring returns alongside an invoice to MOPAC for the total amount spent in the previous quarter (incorporating spending from Respect, CWASU and Waltham Forest)
- Similarly, Respect and CWASU will invoice Waltham Forest for the total spent in the previous quarter

7.1.7 Risks

7.1.8 Risks include:

- Non-approval risk; loss of full grant funding and inability to continue delivery
- Delivery risk; managed through established partnerships with experienced providers
- Financial risk; minimal, as funding is ringfenced and externally funded

7.1.9 Please note Waltham Forest would not be expected to cover overspend by Respect or CWASU. This would be the responsibility of Respect/CWASU to flag to Waltham Forest for discussion with our funders MOPAC and Foundations.

7.1.10 Waltham Forest should only claim what has been spent from the grant. If Waltham Forest and delivery partners do not spend the contingency budget, then Waltham Forest will not claim that amount from MOPAC. Waltham Forest will therefore never have to return underspend as we will not claim anything unspent.

7.2 Legal

7.2.1 Under the proposals in this Report, the Council will act as the lead accountable body for the proposed grant from the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC).

7.2.2 The Council Legal Services will need to be engaged to ensure that the grant funding agreement under this scheme can provide provisions so that the Council can lawfully receive and distribute funding and that it:

- a) provides funding to the selected delivery partners: Respect and London Metropolitan University's Child and Women Abuse Studies Unit;
- b) provides for deliverables for the identified delivery partners; and
- c) Restricts use of funds to the Safe and Together Project only.

- 7.2.3 The Council has the power under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 and Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 to do anything that an individual may do unless constrained by other legislation. The approval of the proposed grant funding for the delegated authority to the Director of Children's Services, to accept the Safe and Together London Partnership grant from MOPAC on behalf of the Council, and to allocate the funding to the VAWG team to continue the rollout of the Safe and Together model across Waltham Forest Children's Services would be enabled under that power.
- 7.2.4 Section 1 of the Local Government (Contract) Act 1997 provides that every statutory provision conferring or imposing a function on local authority confers power on the local authority to enter into a contract with another person for the provision or making available of assets or services, or both, (whether or not together with goods) for the purpose of, or in connection with, the discharge of function by the local authority.
- 7.2.5 From the information supplied, there is no reason to believe that the proposed approach would not comply with the Council's CPRs, the Procurement Act 2023 and the Subsidy Control Act 2022.

7.3 **Equalities and Diversity**

- 7.3.1 The programme has a positive impact on protected groups, particularly:
- Women (who are disproportionately impacted by domestic abuse)
 - Children and young people
 - Individuals experiencing multiple forms of disadvantage
- 7.3.2 Locally, regionally and globally women and girls are disproportionately affected by the types of violence and abuse that we consider under the umbrella of VAWG. Research evidences VAWG as both a cause and consequence of gender inequality and a manifestation of Misogyny. Work delivered to prevent VAWG, support survivors' recovery and hold perpetrators to account has a positive impact on gender equality.
- 7.3.3 Black and minoritised women experience disproportionately higher levels of VAWG and multiple barriers to specialist support and justice. Although the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) 2023 presented that a significantly higher proportion of people aged 16 years and over in the Mixed and White ethnic groups experienced domestic abuse, Black, minoritised and migrant women are more likely to experience domestic homicide. Data from Refuge, the UK's largest single provider of domestic abuse services, shows that Black women are less likely to be referred by police to Refuge for support. In addition, barriers relating to racist discrimination, language difficulties and insecure immigration status can lead to Black and minoritised women being trapped in violent relationships for longer than White British women.

- 7.3.4 The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) showed that amongst adults aged 16 to 74 in the year ending March 2020, disabled people were more than twice as likely to have experienced domestic abuse, stalking or rape than non-disabled people.
- 7.3.5 A literature review undertaken from Safelives in 2022 on the constructions and experiences of intimate relationships for care experienced people concluded that care experienced people may be at an increased risk perpetration and victimisation of intimate partner violence.
- 7.3.6 The Safe and Together model:
- Recognises survivor strengths and challenges perpetrator behaviour
 - Acknowledges the impact of intersections and intersectionalities in abusive relationships
 - Encourages practitioners to consider privilege and oppression when thinking about the dynamics of abuse
- 7.3.7 It has been agreed that an Equality & Diversity Action Plan will be created and monitored by Foundations.
- 7.3.8 An initial screening exercise of the equality impact of this decision was undertaken and is appended to this report. It determined there was minimal impact on the Council's equality duty.

7.4 **Sustainability (including climate change, health, crime and disorder)**

- 7.5 The programme contributes to:
- Community safety and crime reduction through improved responses to domestic abuse
 - Health and wellbeing by reducing harm to children and families
 - Long-term system sustainability through improved practice and reduced repeat interventions
- 7.5.1 The programme is anticipated to have a beneficial impact on crime and community safety, particularly in relation to domestic abuse. Enhanced multi-agency practice, a strong focus on perpetrator identification and accountability, and earlier, more effective intervention is likely to contribute to reduced harm and re-victimisation, improving safety outcomes for children, families, and those affected by domestic abuse.

7.6 **Council Infrastructure**

- 7.6.1 The programme will:
- Be managed within existing staffing structures, supported by project management funding
 - Requires no further IT set up or technological support

- Strengthen workforce capability through training, consultations and workshops

Background Information (as defined by Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)

None.