



EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT COVER SHEET

Title of Report:	Scrutiny Review of the White Ribbon Campaign	To be marked with an 'X' by Democratic Services after report has been presented
Meeting of:	Scrutiny (Environment, Health & Well-being) Committee	x
	Corporate Management Team	x
	Pre Cabinet	x
	Cabinet	

Scrutiny Committee Review Final Report

Title: Violence against Women & Girls and the White Ribbon Campaign

Scrutiny Committee: Scrutiny (Environment, Health & Well-being) Committee

Committee Chair: Cllr Ackroyd

Sub-group Members Leading Review:

- Cllr C Wileman
- Cllr H Hall
- Cllr J Killoran
- Cllr L Beech
- Cllr L Walker
- Cllr P Walker
- Cllr V Gould

Is the Report Confidential? No

If so, please state relevant paragraph from Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972: N/a

Scope for Violence against Women & Girls and the White Ribbon Campaign review in East Staffordshire

Scrutiny (Environment, Health & Well-being) Committee

Sub Group Membership:

Cllr P Ackroyd (Chair)
Cllr C Wileman
Cllr H Hall
Cllr J Killoran
Cllr L Beech
Cllr L Walker
Cllr P Walker
Cllr V Gould

Background / Context:

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) remains a challenge for communities in the UK. At a recent Council meeting a motion was presented to examine the extent of VAWG in East Staffordshire, and for East Staffordshire Borough Council (ESBC) to consider becoming an accredited organisation within the White Ribbon campaign. The mission of the White Ribbon campaign is set out below:

Our mission is to prevent violence against women and girls by addressing its root causes. Our aim is to change long established, and harmful, attitudes, systems and behaviours around masculinity that perpetuate gender inequality and men's violence against women. White Ribbon UK's work is preventative, we want to end violence before it starts.

Consequently, this review seeks to understand VAWG and the positive advantages of joining the White Ribbon campaign.

What are the core questions (no more than 3) the review is seeking to answer?

What are the benefits of the White Ribbon Campaign and what would joining entail for East Staffordshire Borough Council?

What is the purpose of the Review (in one sentence)?

To understand the extent of VAWG in East Staffordshire and the requirements of the White Ribbon campaign.

Scrutiny approach

In scope

What will be included in the review?

Local available data to establish the level of VAWG in East Staffordshire and potential opportunities that ESBC can exploit to reduce this and/or raise awareness of the issues.

Out of scope

What will not be included?

Review of wider Domestic abuse services

What is the timescale?

February 28th 2023

What evidence / data do you need?

National and local VAWG data

Information from the White Ribbon campaign

Resources

Officer time

Stakeholders to interview

White Ribbon representatives and other organisations that are White Ribbon accredited (if appropriate)

SECTION 1: COMMITTEE'S REPORT

1. Violence against Women & Girls (VAWG)

1.1 Before exploring the benefits of joining the White Ribbon Campaign it is important to establish the level of VAWG in East Staffordshire. The annual Strategic Assessment informs the Community Safety Plan for East Staffordshire. This document looks back at levels of crime from the previous year and is then used to determine partnership action for the forthcoming 12 months. According to the 21-22 Strategic Assessment, 790 incidents of VAWG were recorded- representing a 7% increase since the pandemic.

2. What are the benefits of the White Ribbon Campaign?

2.1 The White Ribbon Campaign (WRC) seeks to raise awareness of violence against women and girls (VAWG). VAWG can take many forms and the WRC seeks to moderate male behaviour towards women and girls so that it is neither violent, sexist, harassing nor discriminatory. Internally within an organisation, WRC promotes a culture of change and aims to bring about gender equality. Externally, the campaign aims to use the organisation's standing within communities to promote these behaviours and attitudes. Joining WRC also provides a visible illustration to staff, residents and partners that the organisation is committed to eradicating VAWG.

3. What does joining entail?

3.1 Joining the WRC and attaining accreditation is achieved through the delivery of a White Ribbon Accreditation action plan. The plan is divided into a number of sections covering Strategic Leadership, Engaging Men & Boys, Changing Culture and Raising Awareness. However, some of the actions overlap with each other and for ease of reference the actions have been categorised and then discussed under the headings of:

- Staff Ambassadors and Champions
- Policy & Training
- Operation service practice
- Communications
- Joint Work

4. Staff Ambassadors and Champions

4.1 Ambassadors (male staff) and Champions (female staff) play a prominent role in the WRC and the action plan delivery. This starts at the highest level of the organisation and at first involves a senior level decision to seek accreditation and deliver against the three-year action plan. Along with that decision, a senior leader is expected to act as the strategic organisational lead and be the executive level ambassador or champion. In support of the Senior Ambassador should be a nominated contact lead that monitors the action plan and reports back to the WRC; this individual must also be an ambassador or champion. Furthermore, this designated officer is expected to keep up to date records of staff that are ambassadors or champions.

4.2 Oversight of the action plan is achieved through the formation of a steering group, of which, all members must be either an ambassador or champion. The organisation must recruit a

minimum of four ambassadors and/or champions and these are required to come from all levels of the organisation. No minimum guidance is given on the numbers needed to form the steering group, although the action plan proposes a minimum of four ambassadors.

- 4.3 Once an officer or elected member has agreed to become an ambassador there is a requirement to promote the WRC promise, help other staff colleagues understand the importance of wearing the WRC emblem and have open conversations about acceptable male behaviours in the workplace. Outside of the work environment, ambassadors should promote the WRC to males from across all communities

5. Policy & Training

- 5.1 Sitting alongside the creation of ambassadors and champions are actions that could be considered policy or training items. Firstly, that HR policies cover men's violence toward women and that domestic abuse policies are shared and understood. Furthermore, all policies should align with Home Office guidelines. Policies should also incorporate a zero-tolerance approach to sexist, harassing and abusive behaviours that involve clear reporting mechanisms are available for reporting incidents. In addition, those that do report an incident/s are given suitable support. Staff training packages that incorporate information about violence against women promotes positive masculine traits and uphold the value of the WRC feature within the requirements of the action plan. For entertainment venues operated by the Council, staff must be suitably trained to handle a potential incident that involves violence against women or girls or know how to support a potential victim.
- 5.2 Policies that may require review include building a commitment to reducing VAWG into any commissioning process and utilising this as a social value indicator.

6. Operational service practice

- 6.1 Outside of internal policy changes are actions that impact upon external service delivery. Within the licensing arena there is a presumption against allowing sexual entertainment venues through a review of the associated policy. When considering support and housing services it must be ensured that there are adequate provisions made for women fleeing violence. Finally, that the organisation manages a safe evening and night economy.

7. Communications

- 7.1 Communications feature heavily in the WRC action plan. Primarily, the organisation is required to produce a "comprehensive communications plan". What this entitles and what scale is viewed as "comprehensive" is unclear and the action plan framework offers no further guidance. Akin to other promotional campaigns conducted by the Council, information providing help and guidance is to be displayed throughout premises and in locations that generate high resident or staff footfall. Furthermore, all staff are encouraged to wear the white ribbon and WRC materials utilised. Communications should also stretch beyond the internal organisation, with the accreditation actions advocating that the WRC message is spread amongst communities and that November 25th is recognised: White Ribbon Day- the International Day to End Male Violence Against Women.

8. Joint Working

- 8.1 One final element to consider is the WRC advocacy for joint working. Accredited organisations are encouraged to work with communities, sports clubs, music venues and key local partners to promote positive messages around VAWG. Equally, there is an expectation that strategic linkages will be forged with key partners to further enhance the reach of the WRC message.

9. Further considerations

- 9.1 Although the committee had been asked to look at the WRC following the aforementioned motion, the topic did spark a healthy debate amongst members about acceptable behaviours and how standards are set and adhered to. Members discussed at length the need for dignity and respect when considering officer to officer, officer to member, member to member, member to public, officer to public, public to officer and public to member interactions. Whilst all members agreed that VAWG was an immediate and pressing issue, not all felt that the WRC was the correct vehicle for ESBC to employ. Subsequently, the vote on adopting the WRC was not unanimous. Much of the resultant debate focused on policies already in existence that aim to moderate behaviours. Contributions from HR highlighted that the Council already has Dignity at Work, Safeguarding, Whistleblowing and Domestic Abuse Policies, which fulfil a number of obligations set out in the action plan: although none specifically address male behaviours towards women. Many of these policies have been either reviewed in the last 12 months or are scheduled to be done so in 2023/24. Running in parallel to these policies are the Code of Conduct and Constitution which has a number of elements that establish acceptable behaviour standards.
- 9.2 Outside of policy provision, HR provided information on how ESBC have supported various national campaigns around domestic abuse through the raising of awareness and sharing information/resources to colleagues via the staff briefing. The well-being sections consistently include contact information for support for anyone who may be experiencing domestic violence (including specific details for support for women in particular). Furthermore, examples were provided of how bespoke training has been utilised to promote positive workplace behaviours. Refreshed training for safeguarding is also being reviewed. The intention is to bring together new training sessions for staff and members. Domestic abuse is one component addressed in the Safeguarding policy. This training is likely to begin in 2023-24 and is considering further ways to enhance the awareness of individual responsibilities, awareness of reporting channels, and of support organisations for all staff; and in particular new starters
- 9.3 Due to the uncertainty around WRC, member research did lead to the proposal of another scheme in the form of NALC's (National Association of Local Council's) Civility and Respect Pledge. Furthermore, members heard how the Staffordshire Violence Reduction Alliance (VRA) are promoting a Safer Places for Women & Girls Charter and Toolkit and that the Deputy Leader for Partnerships was strongly advocating that ESBC should be signatory.

10. Recommendations

- 10.1 Consideration is given to ESBC becoming a White Ribbon accredited organisation.

SECTION 2: OFFICER CONSIDERATIONS

11. Financial Considerations

This section has been approved by the following member of the Financial Management Unit:

11.1 The main financial issues arising from this Report are as follows:

11.1.1 It has been advised that becoming a White Ribbon accredited organisation incurs an annual fee of £600. This and related officer time will need to be met from the existing MTFS budget of the service responsible for delivery.

11.1.2 Additional training for front-line officers falls within the corporate training budget provided for the purpose.

12. Legal Considerations

This section has been approved by the following member of the Legal Team: Glen McCusker – Locum Solicitor

12.1 The Authority has the power to do anything which an individual could do by virtue of section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. This will cover the decision to become a “White Ribbon” accredited organisation.

13. Risk Assessment and Management

13.1 The main risks arising from this Report and the Council achieving its objectives are as follows:

13.2 Positive (Opportunities/Benefits):

13.2.1 Raises awareness of VAWG and helps build gender equality and a positive work place culture.

13.2.2 Many of the proposed actions are already addressed via other Council policies and procedures.

13.3 Negative (Threats):

13.3.1 Is not the only method that can be utilised to promote positive behaviour.

13.3.2 Potential for resource implications on officer time.

13.4 The risks do not need to be entered in the Risk Register.

13.5 Any financial implications to mitigate against these risks are considered above.

14. Equalities and Health

14.1 **Equality Impacts:** The subject of this Report is not a policy, strategy, function or service that is new or being revised. An equality and health impact assessment is not required at this

time.

14.2 **Health Impacts:** The outcome of the health screening question does not require a full Health Impact Assessment to be completed. An equality and health impact assessment is not required.

15. Human Rights

15.1 There are no Human Rights issues arising from this Report.

16. Sustainability (including climate change and change adaptation measures)

16.1 Does the proposal result in an overall positive effect in terms of sustainability (including climate change and change adaptation measures?)

17. Appendices

17.1 WRC accreditation programme and overview.

17.2 Action Plan framework- Local Authorities.

17.3 NALC Civility & Respect project <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/civility-and-respect-project>

17.4 Safer Places for Women & Girls Charter and toolkit.