

Safer Streets Fund 4 – Addressing violence against women and girls in public places

Date: 24th August 2022

Report of: Head of Community Safety Services, Safer Stronger Communities

Report to: Director of Communities, Housing and Environment

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

The Safer Stronger Communities Team have secured £208,095 from the Home Office Safer Streets Fund 4 for the delivery of specified projects aimed at addressing violence against women and girls in public places.

This report details the background, purpose and scope of the proposed projects, the timescales for implementation and the arrangements for grant funding two key partner organisations (specified in the funding application) to support successful project delivery.

Recommendations

The Director of Communities, Housing and Environment is recommended to:

- a) To approve the spend of £208,095 of Home Office grant funding as per the funding application submitted by the West Yorkshire Combined Mayoral Authority of behalf of Leeds City Council.

What is this report about?

- 1 The West Yorkshire Combined Mayoral Authority have submitted a bid to the Home Office's Safer Streets Fund 4 (SSF4) on behalf of the region. This bid has been successful and allocates £208,095 to Leeds City Council for the delivery of projects to address violence against women and girls (VAWG) in public spaces.
- 2 In 2021, Safer Stronger Communities secured a smaller amount of Home Office funding to deliver some short-term pilot projects aimed at addressing violence against women and girls in Leeds City Centre. Following the success of these pilot projects, the successful SSF4 bid will enable the delivery of these projects over an 18-month period, as well as the delivery of some additional public campaigns focused on the safety of women and girls in public places.
- 3 The funding application specifies that of the £208,095 total funding amount:
 - a) £95,646 is to be grant funded to Women's Lives Leeds (via their lead partner Leeds Women's Aid) to deliver the 'Women's Safe Space' project;
 - b) £66,749 is to be grant funded to BACIL to deliver the 'Street Marshals #NightSafeOwls' project; and
 - c) £45,700 is to be retained by Leeds City Council to be spent on projects led by the Safer Stronger Communities Team and delivered via our multi-agency Night Safe Leeds partnership.
- 4 The delivery period for the proposed projects is September 2022 – March 2024.

What impact will this proposal have?

- 5 Women and girls have raised that having a safe place to seek refuge or support during the night-time economy is an essential need. Therefore, the Women's Safe Space project will provide a mobile unit for women and girls in Leeds City Centre to seek refuge or support, e.g. by providing a safe place to rest, charge phones, order taxis or even evade a potential perpetrator. This will improve the safety of women and girls visiting the city centre at night.
- 6 The project and operations will be managed by a Women's Safe Space Coordinator (employed by Women's Lives Leeds) and supported by a Bevan Healthcare practitioner, a female security officer and volunteers as appropriate. It will operate between the hours of 10pm and 5am over a set number of sessions, using evidence and intelligence to determine days of the week and location of the mobile unit. It will access the BACIL radio network and work alongside statutory and non-statutory partners including LeedsWatch, West Yorkshire Police Neighbourhood Policing Team and the #NightSafeOwl street marshals.
- 7 Additionally, the Women's Safe Space Coordinator will work to develop a business case to progress the ambition of a long-term, dedicated women-only, fixed 'Safe Space' premise in the night-time economy beyond the project delivery period. A positive outcome will support a long-lasting impact on the safety of women and girls in Leeds City Centre.
- 8 Women and girls have told us that a visible, uniformed presence is a key component in helping them to feel safe when accessing the city centre at night. Therefore, the Street Marshals #NightSafeOwls project will provide a highly-visible, uniformed presence in the night-time economy, with staff trained in a range of communication and intervention techniques to deter, detect and de-escalate place-based anti-social behaviour, incidents and offences. This will reduce the risk, threat and harm to women and girls in the city centre as well as reducing demands on emergency services.

- 9 The project and operations will be managed by a Night Safe Coordinator (employed by BACIL – an SIA registered service), responsible for overseeing six Street Marshal employees as well as working closely with the Police, Safer Leeds, Licensing, BACIL and Pubwatch members to improve safety and responses to VAWG in licensed premises. This work in particular will continue to have a positive impact on the safety of women and girls beyond the funding period.
- 10 Changing male behaviour, increasing reporting and sending out a clear message that VAWG will not be tolerated in Leeds are all critical elements of our work to address VAWG. Therefore, the Safer Stronger Communities will lead (through our local multi-agency approach and with leadership from women and a girls) a significant communications campaign to deliver these key community safety messages. As well as furthering the work on Ask for Angela, this will include refreshing and reinvigorating the overarching branding of the ‘Night Safe Leeds’ multi-agency partnership and developing a series of collaborative and co-produced campaign materials to be used on-street, in premises and online.
- 11 On-street messages will target specific places which have been identified by women as places where they feel particularly unsafe e.g. the train station, bus station/bus stops, taxi ranks, in venues and around the entrances/exits of key NTE streets. Messages will include a focus on nudging behaviours and a ‘peer-to-peer’ narrative. The anticipated impact is that reports of VAWG offences will increase as women and girls feel more confident to report it, potential perpetrators will be deterred, and the messages will contribute to a longer-term shift in misogynistic attitudes and behaviours.
- 12 Whilst the funding and projects are specifically aimed at reducing violence against women and girls, and making women and girls feel safer, the by-product of these initiatives will be the increased safety of all people visiting Leeds City Centre at night.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing Inclusive Growth Zero Carbon

- 13 The projects particularly support the Health and Wellbeing pillar of the Best City Ambition by helping to ‘deliver a safe and welcoming city’. They also seek to address the inequalities around safety in public places which impact on women and girls.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 14 The Head of Community Safety Services meets on a quarterly basis with Ward Members for the four wards linked to the city centre and the funding application has been discussed and supported during these meetings.
- 15 Wider consultation has been through the multi-agency city centre partnership, including Women’s Lives Leeds who conducted the Leeds Women’s Safety 2021, which has contributed significantly to the project rationale.

What are the resource implications?

- 16 £12,700 has been allocated from the funding bid to cover the project management provided by the Safer Stronger Communities Team. All funding required to deliver these projects will come from the Safer Streets Fund, plus funding from BACIL to cover 1/3 of the costs of the Night Safe Coordinator post.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 17 There are no significant risks associated with the delivery of these projects. All minor and medium risks (e.g. challenges in recruiting volunteers) will be managed through normal project management processes, namely a project risk register which all delivery partners contribute to.
- 18 In the event that the proposals in this report are not approved, or the projects are not delivered, unspent monies may need to be returned to the Home Office.

What are the legal implications?

- 19 There are no legal implications.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

- 20 Other suggestions were discussed and considered through the city centre partnership arrangements. Based on success with the pilot projects and evidence from the Women's Safety Survey, the projects proposed within this report were held to be the most suitable options for this particular funding application.

How will success be measured?

- 21 The number of women and girls accessing the Women's Safe Space will be a measure of its success, as well as the number of incidents the Street Marshals successfully de-escalate, number of people they support to safety etc. The number of reports of offences against women and girls linked to the NTE will also be an indicator of success. As one of the project aims is to increase reporting, we would expect reports to increase in the short-term, followed by a longer-term decrease. Positive feedback from women and girls will be a key indicator of success. Feedback will be sought by engaging with women and girls through our delivery partners e.g. Women's Lives Leeds.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

- 22 The projects will be delivered between September 2022 and March 2024. The Head of Community Safety Services will have responsibility for the implementation.

Appendices

- Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Screening

Background papers

- None.