



Wandsworth Council Leader speech on International Women's Day

Hello everyone. For those of you I haven't met yet, I'm Simon Hogg, Leader of Wandsworth Council. I think you have already heard from our Deputy Mayor, Cllr Jafri; I know our Deputy Leader Cllr Akinola is also here today.

It's an honour to be here at STORM on International Women's Day. Thank you for the work you do, and thank you very much Marie for inviting me to be here today, and to say a few words about the work we have been doing as a Council to tackle VAWG and support survivors.

Keeping our communities safe is a top priority for the Council. I'm really proud that since our administration took over the Council, we have **doubled our investment into domestic abuse support**.

We've hired **new staff specialising in supporting survivors**, and we've launched a **VAWG Community Forum**, which is a new platform for community organisations and police colleagues to come together.

We're running the **Safe Space** in Clapham Junction on Friday nights, which is staffed by police, and is there to support women and girls or anyone feeling vulnerable. It provides advice and support for all forms of VAWG, and the opportunity to chat with officers.

This is all part of our work to make Wandsworth a safer place for everyone.

We know how important **CCTV** is in protecting our residents and bringing criminals to justice, so we're investing into our CCTV network, hiring new staff members to monitor over 1,000 CCTV cameras across the borough which record 24/7, 365 days a year.

Our new **Community Safety Officers** will be out and about in local communities, targeting areas with high levels of crime, and engaging with victims of crime.

We know that **working with young people** is vital to preventing violence and abuse, so we're going to schools to help provide education on this subject. We're also investing in youth work across the borough – our new Family Hub in the Yvonne Carr centre is not far from here, and it brings services together so that children and families can access the support they need all in one place.

We also know that the Cost of Living crisis is putting huge pressure on residents in lots of different ways, and that financial difficulty can create even more pressure in situations of

domestic abuse. I'm proud that the Council has the **biggest Cost of Living support package** in London, with £15 million allocated to supporting residents through the crisis.

So as a Council, we've made tackling violence and abuse a top priority, but it's clear that we couldn't possibly do this work alone. The work of our brilliant voluntary and community sector organisations is absolutely vital.

We know that too often, residents struggle to access the support they need. We're doing everything we can as a Council to improve this, but we absolutely couldn't do it without our brilliant VCS, who step in to help residents when they need it the most.

It's an honour to be here talking about this at STORM today. As we all know, STORM has an incredible impact on our communities here in Wandsworth, offering support for survivors of domestic abuse, as well as delivering youth activities. We're really proud to have such a brilliant service in our borough.

That's why our new administration at the Council is working with the VCS in a new way, holding regular events to bring people together, and **more than doubling** the grant funding we provide to local organisations.

We're also working much more closely with our **Police** colleagues. I've already mentioned projects like the Safe Space in Clapham Junction which we run with the Police.

Our brilliant Chief Superintendent Clair Kelland has made tackling domestic abuse a big personal priority, and it's brilliant to work closely with her on this.

So, we'll keep working hard, with the Police, with the VCS, and with our residents, to tackle violence and abuse in our borough.

But if anyone here feels that there is more we could be doing, please do come and speak to me or the other Councillors, or write to us – we want to hear your thoughts and suggestions on how we can keep working to make Wandsworth a safe place for all. Thank you very much.