



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021-22**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - CRIME & DISORDER COMMITTEE**

**1<sup>st</sup> December 2021**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR - PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION & COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**Agenda Item No. 3**

Keeping women and girls safe in RCT- an overview of new measures being implemented across public spaces

**Author:** Gary Black, Community Safety and Strategic Partnerships Manager

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To update Elected Members on the further measures being implemented in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) to keep women and girls safe in public places.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that members:

2.1 Scrutinise the content of the report and express their views on the new measures being implemented for keeping women and girls safe in public spaces in RCT.

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 At the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee Meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021, a detailed report was presented outlining the current arrangements in Rhondda Cynon Taf to keep women and girls safe in public places.

3.2 Elected Members determined at this meeting that there was a requirement for Officers to look at further initiatives and to identify relevant data to assure members that appropriate actions were being taken to keep women and girls safe in public places in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

#### **4. SAFER STREETS 3 FUNDING**

- 4.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Authority and South Wales Police worked collaboratively on an application for Home Office 'Safer Streets 3' funding, and the application was submitted in July 2021.
- 4.2 The focus throughout the planning of the application was partnership co-operation to identify areas where we could impact on Violence Against Women and Girls crime types more broadly and to target our demand locations within Rhondda Cynon Taf. This was in recognition of the wide-spread concern from our communities about this issue and the evidence of need in RCT. The demand locations identified after extensive analysis and consultation were:
- Pontypridd Town Centre;
  - Beddau Park;
  - Cae Fardre Estate;
  - Aberdare Town Centre and Ynys Bridge.
- 4.3 The Home Office were very receptive of our application and despite a very high standard of applications submitted by other Local Authorities, Rhondda Cynon Taf were the only region within South Wales to be successful.
- 4.4 On the 4<sup>th</sup> October 2021 the Rhondda Cynon Taf locality was awarded 'Safer Streets 3' funding to the amount of £457k to be spent by March 2022 on new interventions by South Wales Police and the Council and facilitate investment in additional infrastructure to improve community safety.

#### **Interventions**

- 4.5 The following interventions were identified in the 'Safer Street 3' proposals for RCT and take a holistic approach to address the issues of Violence against Women and Girls in the targeted areas and more broadly across the local authority area, with the aim of bringing about a wider positive effect over time to reduce Violence against Women and Girls:
- 4.6 **Measures to improve community safety infrastructure:**
- I. Improve and enhance public space CCTV at vulnerable locations throughout RCT, combining fixed and re-deployable cameras.

CCTV brings real benefits across the local authority area. Unfortunately, there are some areas where we cannot provide that fixed camera cover. Purchasing re-deployable units will provide the option to target those areas and where significant community safety issues arise. There are often requests from elected members and residents to deploy mobile CCTV to crime hot spots where local residents feel unsafe due to crime levels. The purchase of these additional cameras will enable the

Authority to be more responsive to resident's needs. Additionally, when major events take place in RCT the cameras can be deployed to provide additional street cover and support our ambition to provide safe routes into and out of the event environment. They will act as a deterrent to offenders and provide reassurance to individuals walking through the area. Deployed at vulnerable locations, they will also provide evidence and intelligence to the Police and reassure the community.

We have reviewed our CCTV coverage in Pontypridd and Aberdare and recognise that the system would also benefit from additional fixed CCTV cameras at entrance/exit points in the towns. By installing 4 new cameras, the CCTV coverage will improve and support our work to enhance safe routes. CCTV footage regularly provides evidence and intelligence to the police to support criminal convictions and target ASB hotspots. CCTV operators support a co-ordinated police response to live time incidents and they often prove invaluable intelligence when assisting officers to trace and locate offenders, and trace and locate vulnerable victims.

We have also reviewed our CCTV provision in Ynysangharad Park, Pontypridd. It is central to the town centre, has many attractions and is frequented by 750,000 people per year. There are, however, occasions when individuals enter the park who are impaired through drink or drugs. The park has also been a venue where we have seen incidents of large disorder. Disorder reported in the local news and shared widely on social network sites. Additional CCTV will be installed to improve CCTV coverage at points where we have seen disorder and assaults take place. They will provide evidence and intelligence to the Police and reassure the community.

II. Install new and improved lighting in the Cae Fardre Estate ensuring women and girls, and the rest of the community, feel safer

The Estate has 13 columns with old technology lanterns. We propose to upgrade each column and rewire with new technology lanterns. This will provide the Estate with a better source of lighting and improved safety for residents. The newly installed technology will incorporate a power- set system, wherein the power can be altered up or down very easily on-site providing flexibility if the need arises. Residents have indicated that they feel unsafe at night and fear groups of youths and offenders using drink and drugs. We know that improved lighting provision does have an impact on the fear of crime and when combined with re-deployable CCTV provision; these two tactics will have an impact on reducing crime, detecting crime and reducing the fear of crime for the residents.

III. Improve public space on the Cae Fardre Estate to reduce dark spaces.

The Cae Fardre Estate continues to suffer from crime, fear of crime and ASB. There are particular issues of environmental crime in the vicinity of the residential blocks at Castle Court. In addition to the investment being made by Trivallis on the Estate, this funding will enable us to create a defensible space through additional railings and

improved natural surveillance through removal of redundant bin stores. It will also facilitate re-landscaping of areas to enhance the visual aesthetic and design out crime. Installation of a new 'safer by design' communal bin store will provide a sustainable solution to the environmental crime evident on the Estate. We know that creating safe spaces on a residential estate does bring about a reduction in crime and fear of crime. We aim to address some of these concerns for the residents by combining several approaches. The improvement in lighting, access barriers, fencing, the removal of legacy buildings, re-deployable CCTV and increased police visibility with crime road shows will bring about crime reduction benefits and improve the lives of the residents.

IV. Install new fencing to the Ynys Underpass, near Aberdare Skate Park, thereby improving the public space

The location has been a source of concern for local residents, Elected Members and the Police for a number of years. The location affords young people a place of cover from the elements and cover from view. The underpass supports Natural Resources Wales flood plan and also forms part of a parallel path running alongside the River Cynon so the complete underpass cannot be fenced off. The balustrade of the bridge forms natural sitting points which are an attraction to local youths. The fence will prevent access to these sitting points and discourage groups of individuals gathering in a well-known ASB/crime hotspot. The Local Authority has already installed CCTV and lighting in this area. The fence installation will prevent access to the location, therefore reducing the attractiveness of the location to youths. We hope to see a reduction in crime, ASB and the fear of crime in the locality. There will also be engagement events with the police drop box in Aberdare as requested by youths following our consultation. With a reduction in youths frequenting the underpass area we aim to safeguard young people from exploitation, reduce VAWG crime types and reassure the local residents.

V. Complete environmental alterations to Beddau Park

The Hawthorn hedgerow is an established and traditional feature of the park which runs through the centre and whilst it has a lot of ecological value and enhances the biodiversity of the park, it can also add to the users' perception of 'feeling unsafe'. Reducing the height of the hedgerow will increase the natural surveillance and 'open up' the walkway, giving a perception of improved safety. Removal of the privet hedge and gateway which currently segregates the two children's play areas will enable adults to supervise children more easily and create synergy between the two separate spaces so all children of all ages can play together more easily. This will also help in general terms with safeguarding and reduce the fear of harm and intimidation especially amongst teenage girls.

Replanting in zones around the bowling green and replacing a side gate with hedging will also help to reduce ASB occurrences in this area and improve the look of the facility. Currently the bowling green is easily accessed and there are lots of incidences of ASB and vandalism. With clever landscaping at the heart of the facility,

the activity zones aimed at children and young people could be 'blended' together to create a 'soft' space that positively encouraged users to gather and socialise. Landscaping would include mounding and bunding to create small tiers and banks for pockets of users to sit and gather, which would soften the look of newly installed urban seating and picnic tables. Creating a large 'opened up' space around the skate park, play equipment and basketball court would create an identity for this area of the park and provide an opportunity for the children and young people to take ownership and responsibility for 'their' area, encouraging them to take on a guardianship role.

Creating a distinct zone within the park for children and young people will also help with policing and youth work, which in turn will increase the feeling of 'safety' and reduce the fear of harm. Focussing on the broken window theory, despite once being a well-used area of the park, the basketball and former tennis courts have seen a reduction in provision with only 2 basketball hoops and a goal end remaining. Often strewn with litter and glass, this area is viewed as undesirable and unsafe. With the combination of measures already described, the addition of improvements to the surface would enable the children and young people to reconnect with the activity zone. Reinventing this space would also provide a valuable resource for RCT'S sports development team and youth service to run additional activities.

In conjunction with ASB and fire safety talks in the local schools, the removal of fire damaged bins and installation of new bins more appropriately located around the park will help to reduce litter and improve the appearance of the facility. Litter and fire damage are a major concern of the local residents and users of the park which is evidenced in local consultations and official complaints generated through the Council. The provision of new bins will reduce litter and improve the feel of the park.

As identified in the Environmental Visual Audit conducted, the boundary fence around the lower football field is currently in a state of disrepair and is adding to the concerns being voiced by the local community and users of the park. Apart from improving the visible aesthetics, the fence would create a secure boundary between the neighbouring properties and the park, thus reducing the opportunity for 'accessing' these properties without permission. This will be significant investment and provide a real legacy of improvement for years to come. It will have an immediate effect in visual benefit and reassure the local residents and assist in our attempts to designate safe routes throughout the park.

Rugby and football are at the heart of this community and both clubs operate senior and youth teams. The rugby pitch and stand are secured and surrounded by a steel palisade fence with CCTV installed. The football pitch only has a barrier. This location has suffered incidences of vandalism to the football pitch and the fence would significantly reduce the opportunities for anti-social behaviour and decrease incidents of litter and glass on the pitch, as well as providing an opportunity for the club to 'take ownership' of the field and support the Council in maintaining the cleanliness of the facility. This investment would realize real benefits in improving this public space and reduce criminal activity in the immediate area. The rugby and football clubs will also benefit from targeted community events to raise awareness

around Violence against Women and Girls delivered by the Youth Offending Service, Youth Service engagement vehicle deployments and the polices' mobile drop box.

#### 4.7 **Enhancing Police and Community Engagement Capacity**

##### I. Deployment of a three new mobile Police Station throughout RCT.

The mobile police stations will improve visibility and engagement within the community. The facilities will provide small mobile 'hubs' within designated areas, reassuring the community with highly visible, recognisable places of safety. They will be deployed during daytime and night-time economy environments. All our consultations indicate that the public wish to see Police on the streets and in their communities. They want greater engagement, to see more community events where crime prevention advice can be provided. The purchase of these mobile police stations will provide Neighbourhood Policing Teams with modern facilities to conduct engagement and target the hot spots within their area. This increased visibility will reassure the community and deter criminal activity. The facility will also be a base for delivering crime awareness events, focussing on Violence against Women and Girls.

##### II. Deployment of an additional Youth Engagement Participation Service vehicle throughout RCT.

A peripatetic youth service engagement vehicle would serve as a youth club and be deployed to areas with no suitable venues and provide a base for community engagement and education focussing upon healthy relationships, crime prevention advice and support measures. Our street consultations have indicated a real wish from the community to benefit from engagement opportunities. To supply this demand, our youth service engagement vehicle will be fitted with appropriate technology and service provision to support wider engagement and interaction with young people. The base will be used to provide flexible and targeted educational inputs on Violence against Women and Girls. The vehicles plus the re-commencement of youth club provision across the County Borough and the roll out of Safe Space locations in cafes and other venues, will ensure a network of refuge points for young women and girls at vulnerable public locations.

##### III. Deployment of a Youth Offending Team vehicle

We want to enhance the good work that our Youth Offending Service currently provides under their Youth Engagement Project where they aim to divert young people from criminality and safeguard the vulnerable predominately on Friday and Saturday nights. The purchase of a fully fitted welfare vehicle would greatly enhance that provision, delivering a mobile safe space to dark parks and night-time economy environments where intervention, advice, support and welfare issues can be addressed. Deployments would be concurrent with YEP engagement running between 1700-2300. Between October 20 and March 21 a total of 2694 youths were engaged across the local authority area and we have seen numbers increase as youths congregated in parks and rural areas following the easing of covid restrictions.

The provision of a purpose-built engagement support vehicle will enhance this work and provide a recognisable safe space for those vulnerable in society to recognise and gravitate towards when in need of support or guidance.

#### IV. Deliver the new RCT Digital Bench Scheme

The aim of the Scheme is to encourage youths to congregate in pre-planned safe space in direct response to feedback from young people during the Youth Engagement and Participation Service's (YEPS) street-based work; young people asked for appropriate meeting spaces for them in outdoor community areas. The premise of the Scheme is to support us to tackle a number of issues that young people (and wider community members) regularly report, including making streets safer by ensuring that they have the means to call for help should they need to; allowing young people to meet their peers in appropriate, designated spaces within their communities.

This scheme will provide a location (the area the bench is situated) that the Council and young people jointly agree are appropriate places for them to meet which YEPS can ensure are regularly monitored via the street-based youth work rota. The benches will be situated in well-lit areas, potentially with CCTV coverage, to limit the chance of incidents occurring. Lastly, they are allowing young people to maintain charged phones so they can be used to contact friends, family or support services in the event of an incident. The process of implementing this Scheme has commenced with consulting with young people on the locations within their communities that they would attend and feel are the most in-need places across the Borough. This list of suggested locations has been shared with key Council service areas (e.g. CCTV, Highways, Planning, Parks, Health and Safety) and we are working to risk assess and determine which are feasible and appropriate. Following this, Officers would make an official proposal to relevant local Members and Cabinet Members for this project to be implemented in the agreed locations. A commissioning process has commenced to appoint an organisation to support the installation of the benches. The installation itself would be a series of community-based projects with the successful organisation working alongside young people to design and physically construct the benches in their locality.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, we anticipate installing 2 benches by the end of March 2022 whilst purchasing additional resources for use in the next phase of roll out, during 2022/23. Alongside the installation of the initial two benches, the successful organisation will work with young people in key locations across RCT to start the design work for the additional benches in 2022/23.

#### 4.7.1 Enhancing Education and Support packages for Young People

##### I. Deliver a Healthy Relationship Education Package

This package will augment work already ongoing to deliver Healthy relationships educational inputs which are a key part of the issue-based work of the Youth Engagement and Participation Service. The existing programme of Healthy Relationship Education has been outlined for Committee in a separate report by the Director of Education and Inclusion Services. The programme has been delivered on both a universal and targeted basis with universal sessions have been offered to secondary schools as part of wider 'Positive Wellbeing' Days. Additional funding will enable us to expand the scope of this invaluable work and deliver more educational inputs across the local authority.

## II. Safe Space Initiative

Establishment of a network of organisations that support our "Safe Space" initiative. The initiative will introduce Safe Space provision and assist in reducing Violence against Women and Girls. A "Safe Space" will be a youth-focused location that provides an open access space for young people within their local community in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Every "Safe Space" will be different depending on the community it is based in, the building it is housed in, the needs of the young people within that area and the people running it. A "Safe Space" may be a youth club, community centre, park, sports club or business like a café or activity centre. The hours the "Safe Space" operates will differ across locations but each one will have regular days and opening hours to ensure that young people are aware of when they can access the "Safe Space". This consistency will help to build relationships and trust between the people running the space and the young people that use it. As "Safe Spaces" are established across Rhondda Cynon Taf, a "Safe Spaces" Network will be developed by the YEP service. This Network will provide support to individual organisations by offering advice, guidance and training opportunities to provide an inclusive and space location that young people can benefit from. The YEP service will provide their own "Safe Spaces" and support partner "Safe Spaces" co-ordinated by wider local authority service areas, third sector organisations and private businesses.

The Safe Streets funding has been secured to employ a temporary "Safe Spaces" Co-ordinator to start the Network before it is subsumed into core service delivery.

## III. Introduce a Girls Group to the established "Right Hook" Project

To augment work already underway for boys we will set up a 'Girls Group' – under the "Right Hook" Project. We will target females that may have issues with domestic violence, sexual exploitation or lack of self-esteem and confidence. Workshops will empower young females to know they have the skills to make independent choices in their lives and relationships. Engagement will increase confidence and motivation, assist in setting realistic goals and achieving their potential. The project provides a secure environment from which young females can return to education, training and eventually gainful employment. The package will provide strategies to address abuse and reduce Violence against Women and Girls.



IV. Deliver a “Stalking Behaviours” educational session targeting school pupils in years 7 – 11.

As part of the South Wales Police Stalking and Harassment prevention work, we are developing a ‘Stalking Behaviours’ educational lesson which will be delivered to the age group years 7 -11 in Health and wellbeing and PSE classes across the local authority.

The lesson will include 4 videos which will be created by an animator who has experiences in creating videos to engage young people in school with topical issues. The lesson will support students in being able to recognise and talk about a range of behaviours that can amount to stalking as well as develop strategies to manage them. Students will consider a variety of unwanted and unrepeatable behaviours that are associated with bullying, harassment and finally stalking.

Students will also consider what actions can be taken if this behaviour is witnessed or experienced in order to improve their overall well-being. The lesson will be piloted throughout comprehensive schools in RCT, with future aspirations to be disseminated as a free resource Wales wide, supported through School Beat.

4.8 **New Community Based interventions**

I. Deliver crime prevention initiatives throughout RCT

We will provide crime prevention advice, conduct road shows and advice around Violence Against Women and Girls. We will offer free ‘Stop Violence Against Women and Girls’ branded promotional items and ‘Secure by Design’ personal safety packs and personal alarms to increase the feeling of safety for those who feel they would benefit. Consultation has also indicated groups would appreciate self – defence lessons and these will be provided at various locations throughout RCT.

II. Utilise technology and provide “Hollie Guard” vouchers

A technical product which turns a victim’s phone into a personal safety device. It protects an individual from violence, records evidence and alerts emergency contacts of your whereabouts quickly and easily. We will build on an existing scheme and purchase vouchers which will be allocated to a specified victim of domestic violence or stalking and harassment. Our Domestic Violence team will identify victims and allocate accordingly to provide that reassurance to victims.

III. Implementation of the “Ask for Angela” scheme across all Licensed Premises within RCT.

“Ask for Angela” is a campaign which can be used by bars and other venues to keep people safe from sexual assault by using a codeword to identify when they are in danger or are in an uncomfortable situation. The original “Ask for Angela” campaign was developed by Lincolnshire County Council in 2016. The aim of the campaign



was to create a culture change in relation to sexual violence and abuse and enable those who feel vulnerable in pubs and clubs to discreetly approach staff and request assistance.

Key to the effectiveness of the campaign is that licenced premises and their staff are clearly aware of the campaign and how to respond to an individual should they present and “Ask for Angela”.

RCT Council will support licenced premises and work with premises owners and/or landlords and their staff in partnership to deliver the campaign effectively. The Council will provide all campaign materials and a designated point of contact / support for licenced premises to support effective delivery.

It is recommended that campaign materials, posters etc. be displayed prominently behind bar areas and in the toilet areas of premises. All staff will receive a briefing in respect of the campaign and how to respond effectively should they be approached by a customer asking for assistance. Work to start rolling this initiative out has started with the support of our Pub Watch Network.

Assistance can be provided in the following ways:

- ***Removing the customer to a safe space on the premises so that a confidential discussion can take place and concerns identified;***
- ***Staff requesting a taxi to transport customer or contacting friends or family to collect them;***
- ***Staff returning to their sitting area to retrieve personal belongings***
- ***Accompanying customers off the premises to the agreed safe arrangement;***
- ***Calling the Police if necessary;***
- ***Requesting the person of concern is asked to leave the premises.***

#### 4.9 **Promotion Campaign**

Communicating and engaging with the public on the new and established initiatives being delivered in RCT is a clear priority. In order to promote the work being undertaken, targeted communication is being publicised now in relation to the Ask Angela campaign, with full commitment secured from the licensed trade across RCT through the Pub Watch Scheme. In addition, there will be an RCT media campaign launched in the New Year, with the aim of consolidating everything we are trying to achieve and therefore ensuring visibility of the measures in hand to ensure women and girls are safe within Rhondda Cynon Taf.

## **5. PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

5.1 Detailed information on crime incidents and public perceptions of community safety was provided in the previous report to this Committee. RCT as a County Borough is a safe place in terms of crime and incidents however it is recognised that public perception of how safe they feel in their locality may not reflect this. Going forward, the Community Safety Partnership has identified a number of ways in which we will measure whether our interventions are being effective and contributing to making Rhondda Cynon Taf a safe place particularly for women and girls. We will utilise the following:

- Police data – The crime types we will measure against are harassment / stalking, rape and other sexual offences, violence with or without injury. These statistics will differentiate between “stranger” crimes and “domestic abuse” related crimes.
- Youth Survey – The RCT Youth Engagement Participation Service conduct an annual perception survey amongst 11-25 year olds and we will utilise this mechanism to ask community safety related questions. This will ensure we are obtaining the perception of young people as well as adults.
- Lets Talk RCTCBC – We will set up a new project on the new RCT engagement site Lets Talk RCTCBC. This will enable us to conduct annual surveys with a far reaching audience and for residents to share with us their concerns and ideas for improvement.
- Targeted Surveys – We will conduct engagement events to survey people face to face across our communities, in both towns and outlying communities where possible. This will ensure we are also gauging the views of individuals who do not have access to social media or the internet.
- Street Safe – We will also be utilising the National Police Platform for anyone to report issues within their community that don't require an immediate police response but do cause a concern. Inspector Mike Rudall is the Divisional Single Point of Contact for this initiative and will consult with partners when required. The link to access the platform is [StreetSafe | Police.uk \(www.police.uk\)](http://www.police.uk).

5.2 The collection of the data, both quantitative and qualitative, will be collected on an annual basis and we will closely monitor and be flexible to change our tactics according to the need. South Wales Police, the Council and wider Community Safety partners share the strategic priority and commitment to reducing violence against women and girls' trends in the data sets identified above will enable us to monitor progress.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

6.1 The report highlights the new additional initiatives that will be carried out in Rhondda Cynon Taf to ensure women and girls and other vulnerable people are safe when going



about their everyday lives in public places. A number of established initiatives in RCT, supporting the wider objectives of the Community Safety Partnership and RCTCBC Corporate Priorities are already taking place as outlined in the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021. All of these initiatives work together to promote community safety with each specific intervention adopting an evidence based approach to implementation and evaluation. There is an ongoing need to monitor how safe women and girls feel in public places and the appropriate mechanisms to do so are being established by both the Council and South Wales Police.