

Press release

For immediate release

Making our streets safer for women and girls

Funding to help tackle violence against women and girls has been awarded to North Somerset Council and Somerset County Council. The neighbouring councils have made a successful joint bid to the Home Office Safer Streets Fund for £324,449. The bid is an innovative and collaborative proposal by the two councils covering the whole Somerset policing area. It presents an opportunity to work together and achieve positive outcomes in tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) crimes across the area. The plan sets out a two-tiered approach involving:

- **Prevent** - to change behaviour and stop incidents occurring such as VAWG education and awareness in schools, communications campaigns, research and engagement within communities, and
- **Protect** - to strengthen the response where these incidents are prevalent, such as a safe haven scheme and enhancing the CCTV camera network and street lighting.

In assessing the joint bid the Safer Streets Fund Team commented: "We were impressed this bid effectively demonstrated analysis and drivers of the problems in your target area and identified a suitable response to tackling the issues, deliverable within the 2021/22 financial year.

"We look forward to working with you on this round of funding and believe it can make a real difference in tackling crime and helping individuals and communities to feel safe in public spaces."

"I believe the funding and work proposed will have a massively positive impact across the area and is a much-needed injection of cash in an area that has been long neglected and needs even more investment to make women and girls feel safer and better protected on our streets," said Cllr Mike Solomon, North Somerset Council's executive member for neighbourhoods and community services.

"This is predominantly about stopping these crimes happening at all through education in schools, multi-media communication campaigns and engaging with local communities, as well as making our public areas safer for women and girls by providing safe havens and improving street lighting."

Somerset County Council's cabinet member with responsibility for community safety, Cllr Clare Paul, said: "I would like to congratulate North Somerset Council and Somerset County Council on successfully securing round three of the joint bid and hope that the outcome from this work will help reduce VAWG and increase women and girls' safety in public places.

"With this work we want to understand and address the root causes of why women may not feel safe on the streets. We look forward to building an evidence base for what works on reducing VAWG crimes and improve local data on such crimes."

Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner Mark Shelford added: "Additional support to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls has never been so important. I am delighted to see Somerset and North Somerset being awarded Home Office Safer Streets funding.

"Collaboration and partnership working at local level is key as are clear steps and measurable actions for our organisations so transformation can happen. I am extremely supportive of the preventative programmes being undertaken within local schools, which seek to promote healthy relationships between young people.

"This preventative work is supported by increased surveillance in public spaces to make them safer for women and girls. Statutory agencies and organisations need to take responsibility to make public spaces safer for women and girls by implementing such preventative and protective strategies. I look forward to supporting the local authorities' work."

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