

Appendix 2: Working Group Headlines

Session 1: 3 April 2025.

This session outlined the significance of the working group and focused on setting the scene and expectations for future meetings. Key to this was the acknowledgement of the emotive nature of the topic.

The Plan International Report was discussed in depth as the basis of the of the working group. Plan International UK, a global children's charity striving for an equal world. One where every child can reach their full potential, and every girl can choose her own future.

Between May and June 2023 2,963 UK girls and young women aged 12-21 were surveyed, the highest number in the report's eight-year history, to identify their most pressing concerns. The key themes included:

- Feeling of safety (in person and online)
- Education and future prospects
- Gender inequalities and gender norms
- Cost of living
- Health and wellbeing
- Representation and role models
- Having little trust in politicians and institutions

Plan International online tool: The tool asks, "How tough is it to be a girl where you live?" This tool is powered by a Local Authority index that Plan International have collated, based on a number of indicators available nationally. You can search by postcode or council and learn about the reality of growing up as a girl in your area, and the injustices girls.

Based on the tool, for girls living in the Newark and Sherwood t, they are living in the bottom 20% of places in the UK.

The rest of the district:

- Rushcliffe, Mansfield and Bassetlaw – falling short
- Gedling – bottom 50%
- Nottingham – bottom 20%
- Broxtowe – bottom 20%
- Ashfield - bottom 10%

The merits of the report and data tool: The group noted that Plan International conducted a horizon scanning exercise prior to the survey. This involved workshops with 24 girls and young women (aged 12–20) across the UK, both online and in person, recruited via local networks in Norwich, Torfaen, Perthshire, and Belfast. The resulting survey exceeded their target of 2,600 responses, reaching 2,963. While they aimed for a representative sample using open and closed questions across all UK nations, they acknowledged that this cannot fully reflect the experiences of millions of girls and young women.

Building a fuller picture of Newark and Sherwood: The session was particularly data heavy. Members were presented with wider sources of data and information, including:

- Serious Violence Profile – Newark & Sherwood, including nature and victim profile for different types of crimes
- Domestic Homicide Reviews being undertaken

- Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment, January 2025 (Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire Violence Reduction Partnership (NNVRP), including controlling and coercive behaviour
- Data from Domestic Abuse charities Refuge and Safe Lives – 1 in 4 women in England and Wales will experience domestic abuse in her lifetime. On average, one woman is killed by an abusive partner or ex every five days in England and Wales.
- Healthcare gender gap, including life span vs health span
- Leisure centre enrolment and participation
- Education attainment, NEET (Not in education, employment or training)
- Representation in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects
- Department for Work and Pensions data on Employment rate gap and claimant counts for Universal Credit
- Representation in homelessness counts
- Demand and provisions by food banks

A closer look at the Council: The group considered the support in places and initiatives that enable colleagues to a healthy work/life balance while enabling excellent services to residents. The session highlighted various policies and initiatives designed to promote more effective working, such as Flexible working, including compressed hours, job share, hybrid working, generous annual leave, special leave, time off for dependents and maternity and adoption support. Although they are not all exclusively aimed at women, they reflect the Council's broader commitment to supporting all staff.

To conclude, the key themes from the session were acknowledged, and guest speakers were agreed to be invited to future sessions.

Session 2: 12 May 2025

There were 4 guest speakers in attendance at this session.

- Christie Conroy from Nottinghamshire Women's Aid, supporting NSDC gain the DAHA accreditation.
- Jenny Walker, the Business Manager for Public Protection at NSDC
- Cheska Asman, Homeless Strategy and Safeguarding Officer at NSDC
- Helen Ellison, Senior Health Improvement Officer at NSDC

Christie Conroy focused on Domestic Abuse. Nottinghamshire Women's Aid are the commissioned specialist domestic abuse support provider for women, children and teenagers who live in Bassetlaw, Mansfield and Newark and Sherwood. Domestic abuse affects the whole family, and it can have a serious impact on children.

Christie discussed the challenges, namely being volume of work in general but specifically requests for sanctuary. Sanctuary is a scheme that aims to reduce homelessness and improve safety for survivors of domestic abuse. Instead of requiring individuals to flee their homes, the scheme enables them to remain safely in their current residence by installing security measures such as locks, alarms, and other protective interventions.

Other services provided include counselling, refuge, family court, support for women and children. For example:

Medium Risk Intervention Service – referrals from the police when there has been a police incident, that has been assessed as medium risk and consent has been obtained to refer into service.

Maternity independent domestic violence advisors IDVA service is available to pregnant women or women who have been pregnant or had a child in the last 6 months (including birth, miscarriage, termination, adoption, still birth and infant loss).

Christie highlighted the opportunities for additional education and training in schools, specifically Healthy Relationships training, but other demands and budget pressures restrict their ability to facilitate additional learning.

Jenny Walker focused on Community Safety. The data discussed mirrored information provided by Christie. A number of successes and activities were provided:

- Close partnership working
- CCTV initiatives, increasing feelings of safety amongst all residents.
- Supporting the Healthy Relationship training in schools.
- Prison me no way, to raise awareness among young people about the causes, consequences, penalties, and impact of crime
- Safer Streets, a scheme which has supported the implementation of a 'youth pod' in Balderton.

Jenny highlighted the challenges associated with this area of work. Demand for services is always increasing but funding for activities or support is decreasing. When discussing opportunities and areas to improve, Jenny provided that all school age children should receive Healthy Relationships training.

Cheska Asman focused on Homelessness. She highlighted the number of women sleeping rough, is low. However, outlined that women can often be less visible when homeless. Cheska provided a number of successes:

- National Women's Census Pilot
- Nottinghamshire Women's Severe Multiple Disadvantage Group
- Housing Options Team are supported by an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor

Cheska discussed the challenges in this area. As women are less visible when homeless, evidencing their experiences can be difficult. To improve this area, more cross-functional working is required but additional resource would be necessary.

Helen Ellison focused on Health and Wellbeing. Helen discussed a number of successes and activities:

- Best Start groups
- Development of a Young Person Volunteer task and finish group
- BFF Scheme
- Voluntary Sector Support, focusing on food support and hygiene banks
- RSPH Level 2 Young Health Champs, engaging with young girls
- Dove Body Image Sessions, working to deliver sessions in primary schools
- Food club programmes, which are hugely popular

Helen highlighted that capacity and not having a statutory responsibility can cause challenges in this area. She raised that working with health partners to access data to understand inequalities and having more resource to support schools would be beneficial.

Session 3: 11 June 2025

There were three external speakers in attendance at this session:

- Inspector Charlotte Ellam, Divisional Commander for Newark and Sherwood, from Nottinghamshire Police
- Alexis Knock, Director of Business and Finance and Kelly Evans, Head of Partnerships & Community, from Active 4 Today.

Each speaker focused on their career, the initiatives they have been involved in and how their experiences as women.

Charlotte Ellam first spoke of her personal life, how she began her career and how she learned to separate her work life from her home life. Charlotte worked in many different areas within the policing sector, qualifying as an officer specialising in sexual offences to becoming a Demand Management Inspector and eventually working as the Neighbourhood Inspector for Newark. Throughout her career, Charlotte highlighted the emphasis she placed on being a good leader and role model, mentoring many young women. She outlined a number of successes and initiatives:

- Culture has changed significantly throughout Charlotte's career; there is less tokenism and good systems of mentorship available for young women.
- More awareness and understanding of mental health, societal expectations and boundaries among the new generation
- Higher reporting levels
- Ask for Angela, a scheme aimed at supporting the safety of people.
- Violence Against Women and Girls initiatives
- Safer Gyms accreditation

Charlotte emphasised that increased police presence would be greatly beneficial but unrealistic due to capacity, resources and a demand for officers in certain areas.

Alexis Knock and Kelly Evans focused on Active 4 Today, leisure centres in Newark, Southwell, Blidworth and Dukeries in Boughton. They discussed the aims of the organisation, to be financially viable, provide healthy and active opportunities and to ensure access to all where possible.

Data received at the time of the working group meeting (August 2025), of the 2,706 total memberships, 42% were held by women and 58% by men, a 16% higher proportion for male members. Women tend to dominate group workout areas, while men are more prevalent in the fitness space.

Alexis and Kelly discussed the number of initiatives they have been involved in:

- Free activities for children during the school holidays
- VISPA (Volunteering in Sport and Physical Activity) a volunteer scheme dedicated to sports volunteering in Newark and Sherwood
- Offering bursaries for mental health, SEN and those who are unemployed
- Providing female instructors across all areas
- Providing female only swimming sessions
- Offering self-defence sessions

Alexis and Kelly provided the challenges with this sector. It is widely acknowledged that drop out of sports is at age 14 and encouraging participation can be difficult with many barriers, such as confidence and lack of representation.

Active4Today works closely with schools and share messaging from trusted sources such as Sport England, including [This Girl Can](#) and [Studio You](#). This Girl Can is a national campaign by Sport England that celebrates active women of all shapes, sizes, and abilities. It aims to break down barriers like fear of judgement that prevent women and girls from getting involved in sport and physical activity. Studio You is an extension of the This Girl Can campaign, specifically designed for schools, which offers PE lessons tailored to teenage girls, making it more inclusive, fun, and accessible, especially for those who feel disengaged or intimidated by traditional PE formats.

Alexis and Kelly outlined that they had recently worked with Nottingham Trent University with students studying communications and marketing, which is part of the university's broader programme that partners students with local businesses over several months to help identify strengths and areas for improvement in their communications and marketing strategies.

One of the key findings from the student-led report was the need to improve branding and the use of imagery. It was noted that customers and prospective members respond more positively to marketing materials that feature real, recognisable members rather than generic stock images. This approach fosters authenticity and relatability. The working group agreed and felt that it is important the images reflected a range of people, to promote inclusivity.

Session 4: 5 August 2025.

There were two external speakers:

- Penny Taylor the Head of Newark Campuses
- Holly Youd Youth Engagement Programme Manager at the YMCA

Penny Taylor shared some of career journey and highlights across health, criminal justice, youth offending and education.

She discussed data from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities highlighting that Newark and Sherwood were in the top 10% most deprived areas in England for education, skills, training and employment. Penny provided a number of initiatives they have employed in the Newark campuses:

- Mentoring and coaching projects by women in industry.
- Women gaining experience with local employers whilst attending college.
- Peer learning
- Working with the GRT community to engage those who do not align themselves with traditional learning methods

Penny evidenced the success of these initiatives through case studies and emphasised the importance of colleges providing technical and vocational learning. Colleges provide an opportunity beyond education to empower women, develop self-worth and belief, gain employability skills and receive advice in a range of areas from careers support and sexual health. Alongside this, Penny noted the importance of girls being part of local community groups from a young age such as Brownies in order to foster self-confidence.

Holly Youd shared insights from her recent experience as a science teacher, having only left the profession in late 2024. She reflected on her time teaching STEM subjects and spoke about her perspective as a woman working in the field.

Holly discussed the support young people received through ChangeMakers. Changemaker's is a service that provides skills workshops, action projects and youth voice sessions at the YMCA. These activities empower young people and provide opportunities for further learning and development and employment. Participants were encouraged to explore causes they care about. Some of the events that young people have chosen to take up include:

- Afternoon tea event at Gladstone House to help combat loneliness
- A litter pick event to help protect their environment
- Teaming up with local vets, RSPCA rescue and stray dog services to promote helping animals.

Holly discussed the Developmental Assets Project, an attitude and behaviours survey completed, developed from the Search Institute's Developmental Assets Framework, which identifies 40 research-based, positive experiences and qualities that influence young people's development, helping them become caring, responsible, and productive adults.

YMCA ran the Developmental Assets project in 2023 to survey pupils at 3 secondary schools: Magnus, Newark Academy & Suthers. A single year cohort (Year 8) – circa 300 students took part and the survey is due to be conducted again shortly for comparative purposes. This is with a view to better understand what it's like to grow up in Newark and Sherwood, and highlight any strengths or gaps, to appropriately tailor support for young people.

Session 5: 3 September 2025

In the final session, the working group reflected on data sets and insights shared by both internal and external speakers throughout the previous sessions.

Also, the group invited Sarah Lacey, the Council's Comms and Marketing Manager.

Sarah first shared her background in local government, experiences as a working mum and how she approaches leading her team.

Sarah provided insights into the Council's communications strategy, such as:

- Data insights to engage with a specific target audience
- Gender inclusive language such as "everyone" over "ladies and or "gents"
- Internal campaigns "it is not just banter" through plain and simple communications

Sarah outlined a range of activities and how targeted messaging could support future work in this area. Two videos were shared as part of the presentation:

- A social media video showcasing how the council currently engages younger audiences, specifically through the *Recycling with NSDC* campaign, written by and styled to appeal to Gen Z (Gen Z was born between 1997 and 2012)

It should be noted that Sarah shared with the group that the government introduced a ban of the TikTok app on all UK government phones in 2023. As such the Council have to date taken a stance of not using the social media app.

- An example from the Open Doors Creative Influencers programme, a successful community initiative focused on arts and culture, which places young people's voices at the heart of its messaging

Finally, members were invited to reflect on the recommendations collated so far and highlight any questions or gaps.

All members of the working group will have the opportunity to reflect individually and share additional feedback ahead of the final report being presented to PPIC.