

Prevention First News release



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Funding secured for female personal safety classes in Three Rivers

Police and partners in Three Rivers have successfully secured funding for free female personal safety classes as part of their continued work to highlight and prevent Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).

The three interactive sessions – which will cost participants nothing – will be delivered next month, thanks to a financial grant from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Hertfordshire Community Fund.

The classes – which have been organised by police and will be delivered by [UK Puma Defence \(opens in new window\)](#) – are now a reality thanks to a joint bid submitted by the Neighbourhood Policing Team and Three Rivers District Council.

- The first session, for teenage girls aged between 14 and 17, will be held at **William Penn Leisure Centre** in Mill End, WD3 8JN, from 1pm to 4pm on **Sunday 24 March**.
- The second and third sessions are for adult females; the first will be held at **Three Rivers House** in Rickmansworth, WD3 1RL, from 6pm to 9pm on **Wednesday 27 March**. The second will be held at **William Penn Leisure Centre**, WD3 8JN between 1pm and 4pm on **Saturday 30 March**.

There are 17 spaces available on a first come, first served basis on each of the three courses. You can register your interest for a place on your chosen course using [this online form \(opens in a new window\)](#). The course content focuses on empowerment, situational awareness, de-escalation techniques, self-defence and safety protocols.

Sergeant Holly Cooper-Waldron, who leads the Rickmansworth Neighbourhood Policing Team and is the CSP lead for VAWG, said: “According to recent police data, Three Rivers has seen a reduction in reports relating to VAWG in October,

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Hertfordshire Constabulary, Stanborough Road, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire,
AL8 6XF

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November, and December 2023. In addition, it was found to have the lowest number of reports compared to the nine other Community Safety Partnerships in the county.

“While this is positive and reassuring, we know our preventative work remains vital to ensure that potential victims have trust and confidence in their local police in order to report incidents to us. We are pleased to have secured funding for these classes, and we hope this opportunity for women and girls in Three Rivers helps them feel empowered and safe.”

Michelle Wright, Community Safety Manager at Three Rivers District Council, said: “We’re delighted to have formed part of the bid to secure this important funding and ensure that young females and adult women in our district are given the opportunity to equip themselves with skills to help improve their feelings of confidence and safety.

“Of course, this is just one part of the wider work being done by the Community Safety Partnership to address Violence Against Women and Girls, and we’re acutely aware that we have a vital role in identifying potential perpetrators of these crimes, intervening and therefore preventing them from happening.”

David Lloyd, Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, said: “It is great to see that funding from my office is being used to make a real difference to the safety of women in Three Rivers. Violence against women and girls is a real concern of many residents and these classes are just one of the many actions being taken to make them feel safer.”

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What has been done so far?

The Neighbourhood Policing Team and professional partners have carried out a huge amount of VAWG-focused work in the past six months:

- Increase in high-visibility night-time reassurance patrols alongside intervention colleagues on Friday and Saturday nights.
- Community engagement at ParkRun events in Leavesden, Oxhey and Rickmansworth, in particular female runners, to share personal safety advice.

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- Collaboration with British Transport Police at railway stations, speaking to lone travellers and raising awareness of the Hollie Guard personal safety app (opens in new window).
- Working with local schools to provide reassurance patrols at the start and end of the school day, along with age-appropriate personal safety advice.
- Joint operation with the Community Safety Unit and licensing team carried out at several pubs in the area, to educate the management teams about VAWG, what to look out for, and how to help potential victims. They ensured staff were provided with drink spiking evidence kits, and were aware of the Ask Angela and Ask Clive schemes, as well as the Hollie Guard app. At local PubWatch meetings the team have provided updates of the proactive work being done around VAWG.
- The Walk With A Cop scheme was launched at the end of last year, with events held in all three NPT areas (Rickmansworth, Oxhey and Abbots Langley). It involves the public – particularly women and girls – and professional partners joining local police on a pre-planned, organised walk to highlight any public areas where they feel vulnerable, so that tangible steps can be taken to improve feelings of safety.

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What are we doing to tackle perpetrators of VAWG?

The Constabulary recognises that the responsibility of ending VAWG in Hertfordshire lies with the perpetrators, the police and the wider Community Safety Partnerships across the county. To date, there have been various pieces of work carried out in line with the force's Prevention First approach:

The Chrysalis Centre

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- The Chrysalis Centre is an innovative project designed to help prevent domestic abuse in Hertfordshire. Supported by the force, it is funded by the Home Office and is aimed at helping participants recognise and change abusive, coercive, and controlling behaviours. Anyone worried about their behaviour can self-refer on the [Chrysalis Centre website \(opens in new window\)](#). To date, more than 230 referrals have been made to the centre since it was set up last autumn. The centre brings together a range of professionals from health care, criminal justice and behavioural change experts to introduce clinical and behavioural support to prevent abuse. [Read the full update \(opens in new window\)](#).

Project Vigilant

- Police in Watford successfully piloted a national safety initiative that proactively targets perpetrators of sexual predatory behaviour in the town's night-time economy. First launched in Oxford by Thames Valley Police in 2019, the aim of Project Vigilant is to identify and intercept those who may be displaying concerning behaviour, to protect the public and prevent sexual offences from occurring. The project is now being rolled out in other CSPs in Hertfordshire; you can read more on our [website \(opens in new window\)](#).

White Ribbon Day pledges

- The Constabulary is a proud supporter of the White Ribbon campaign and raised awareness, alongside partners, of the ongoing work of the county's Domestic Abuse and VAWG Partnership via social media at the end of last year. The partnership also encouraged men within their organisations to make the White Ribbon promise never to excuse or remain silent about men's violence towards women. Read more on our [website \(opens in new window\)](#).

Awareness training for hospitality staff

- The Community Safety Unit has delivered several awareness training sessions to hospitality staff across Watford and Three Rivers, teaching them how to look out for and support vulnerable victims. The presentations include inputs from different departments and partners on the topics of hate crime,

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child exploitation and violence against women and girls (VAWG). Read more on our [website \(opens in new window\)](#).



What are the next steps?

While some of the planned work in the pipeline cannot be shared at present, the team are currently receiving training to help deliver PSHE lessons for Year 9 and 10 secondary school students – both male and female – around the topic of consent.

In addition, other members of the team are due to receive training allowing them to educate men on how they can help women feel safe when they are out and about.

How to report a crime or incident

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If you have been a victim of crime, or you believe someone else has, there are several ways you can contact police. If you think a crime is in progress, or someone is in danger, your first call should always be 999.

For less urgent incidents, you can complete the form at herts.police.uk/report, use online web chat at herts.police.uk/contact or call the non-emergency number 101.

Alternatively, you can stay 100% anonymous by contacting the independent charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or via their untraceable online form at crimestoppers-uk.org.

You can use our community voice platform 'echo' to let us know what you think we should be prioritising in your area. Your feedback will help towards shaping our local policing priorities, initiatives and campaigns. Visit bit.ly/priorities-threerivers and tell us your thoughts.

Ends

For further information please contact Senior Press and PR Officer Becca Choules, on 01707 354784 or email rebecca.choules@herts.police.uk

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