

**IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
25th July, 2017**

Present:- Councillor Clark (in the Chair); Councillors Beaumont, Brookes, Cooksey, Cusworth, Elliot, Jarvis, Khan, Marles, Pitchley and Julie Turner.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Allcock, Hague, Marriott, Sansome, Senior and Short.

68. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Jarvis declared a personal interest in Minute No. 16 (Domestic Abuse Update) as she was an unpaid trustee for Rotherham Rise.

69. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions from members of the press or public.

70. COMMUNICATIONS

Corporate Parenting Panel

Councillor Cusworth provided Members of the Select Commission with a written summary of the last meeting of the CPP which was circulated by email. Councillor Cusworth also commented on how productive the meeting was and thanked the Head of Service for his work in developing the work programme.

71. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 4TH JULY, 2017

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission, held on 4th July, 2017, be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair, subject to the following corrections:

Present: Councillors Brookes, Khan, Marles and Sansome.
Apologies for absence: Councillors Cooksey and Elliot.

Minute No. 7 (Evaluation of Barnardo's Reachout Service) - KPMG's contribution to the project was £1,229k.

**72. MEMBERSHIP OF THE HEALTH, WELFARE AND SAFETY PANEL
2017/2018**

No nominations were received. The Chair asked the Senior Adviser (Scrutiny and Member Development) to circulate details to Members of this Select Commission and seek expressions of interest.

73. DOMESTIC ABUSE UPDATE

Councillor Hoddinott gave a brief introduction to the report and introduced the following officers in attendance for this item:-

Ms. K. Hanson – Assistant Director, Regeneration and Environment
Mr. S. Barstow - Head of Service, Community Safety, Resilience and Emergency Planning
Mr. S. Parry - Neighbourhood Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Manager
Ms. M. Raven - Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator

The incidents of domestic abuse had risen in Rotherham, which followed a national trend. Following the discussions at Improving Lives Select Commission in December 2016 and the scrutiny review of 2013, Councillor Hoddinott outlined progress and areas for further development; with all actions from the 2013 scrutiny review listed.

These actions include:

- The Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVA) Service was now permanently funded;
- The Council had prioritised the elements of the Supporting People budget related to domestic abuse;
- Since December 2016, an audit and ‘top level review’ of Safer Rotherham Partnership (SRP) had taken place which had reported positively on the direction of travel and a further Peer Review had been scheduled later in year;
- The Domestic Abuse Strategy was not yet in place but was being submitted to the SRP Board in August 2016. Although the Strategy had been delayed, an action plan had been developed (attached as Appendix A);
- The Domestic Abuse Priority Group (DAPG) had been re-established to lead on this work;
- More work was required to tackle the issue of perpetrators and support to victims at a multi-agency level involving the Council and the Police;
- Further oversight of what provision and how agencies were working together, including voluntary sector provision was required;
- Ensuring that governance and quality assurance were robust.

Attention was drawn to the issues highlighted by Councillor Hoddinott to assure Members that the issues highlighted would be addressed in the Strategy and were due to be discussed at DAPG, with a final draft submitted to the SRP Board in August.

Discussion ensued on the report with the following issues raised/clarified:-

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Was there an understanding of why there was an increase in incidents? – Rotherham was not unique in terms of a rise in incidents although there had also been a historic underreporting of incidents; the Council Plan had a priority action to tackle domestic abuse and, rather than monitor levels of reporting, the Strategy would now monitor outcomes for victims.

Why had the commissioning of the independent peer review been delayed? - An initial overarching review of community safety was undertaken by Blackburn with Darwen Council as a priority. It covered all aspects of the Partnership including leadership and governance. A secondary review would now be undertaken by Salford Council in light of their experience of the Ofsted framework and child-centred focus.

What findings emerged from the “deep dives”? – The exercise was undertaken by Commissioner Ney and Councillor Hoddinott. It was a discussion with partners to examine processes; risk assessments; support for victims and how perpetrators were dealt with. It also examined how the recommendations from the PEEL report were being addressed, particularly in relation to appropriate referrals to other agencies. The “deep dive” established that there were good services in place but were operating in silos rather than holistically. This has been picked up in the Strategy to address how partners worked together and ensure that the work was quality assured and oversight was in place.

What work was being done to work with individuals at risk of becoming perpetrators? – Examples of work were outlined which included the Youth Offending Service; Rotherham Rise, Housing and Education. The value of promoting healthy relationship as part of the school curriculum was reiterated.

Clarification was sought on the status of the Pause Project – The Strategic Director of Children’s Services confirmed that a feasibility study for the Pause Project had been undertaken but no decision had been taken at this point about further engagement in the project. The outcomes from the study would be presented to a future meeting of the Select Commission.

Further detail was requested on the action plan, particularly in relation to what milestones were in place – It was agreed that a synopsis of this information would be circulated. Assurance was given that the action plan was comprehensive and included all related actions arising from peer reviews, audits and “deep dives”, each with specific performance measures. The action plan was to be discussed at the DAPG.

Given domestic abuse had been identified as a high priority, could an explanation be given about why progress was slow? – There had been progress in some areas but this had been unco-ordinated and not guided by strategic aims. The Strategy would focus action collectively across partners.

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What outcomes had there been from the inclusion of domestic abuse in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment? – A written response would be provided.

The Community Safety funding had not been utilised for the purposes outlined, had this funding been lost? – Whilst the funding had not been used for the peer review in 2016, it had been reallocated to partners to address a backlog in domestic abuse referrals.

An explanation was requested in respect of how the collective response to the perpetrator programme could be improved; in particular further details were asked of the approaches taken with male and female perpetrators - There was a separate programme run by the Probation Service for perpetrators who had been through the criminal justice process. In respect of pre-criminal justice process, it had been identified as an area for increased support in order to reduce demand in the longer term. An example was given of a project which was working with both victims and perpetrators with complex support needs. The Police and Crime Commissioner had prioritised domestic abuse and county-wide network was looking to commission a programme through funding made available through the PCC's office to assist a large number of male and female perpetrators.

Further clarification was requested in respect of the county-wide perpetrator programme and RMBC's pro-rata contribution - Discussions were underway to ensure that value for money was achieved and resources were allocated fairly across each of the participating districts. A specification for the programme had been drawn up and invitation for tender would be sought shortly.

Assurances were sought that there was sufficient capacity across partner agencies to respond to domestic abuse – Capacity to respond was kept under review and each of the respective agencies were able to 'flag up' specific issues at the DAPG. There were broader concerns which had been identified in the "deep dives" around backlogs and risks which would be addressed in the Strategy and action plans. It was acknowledged that there were funding pressures; nationally Domestic Abuse Services had been cut with several refuges closing as a result. In Rotherham funding to Domestic Abuse Services had been maintained. Examples were also given where council services had brought in additional resources and voluntary sector partners had successfully bid for external funding.

How was the voice of victim reflected in the Strategy, including those from the Asian and Roma communities? A commitment was given to ensuring that the voice of victim would be included in the Strategy, however, it was acknowledged that further development was required in this area to build on the work already underway with voluntary sector partners.

In response to a question about poor mental health, it was acknowledged that this was a significant factor in domestic abuse, with many cases presenting with substance misuse. Examples were given of how this was being tackled.

Clarification was requested in respect of the “One Front Door” – This was a recommendation of the 2013 scrutiny review; a task and finish group had been set up to explore the feasibility of this option. It was anticipated that this would provide a consistent service and pathways, minimise duplication and lead to fewer people ‘slipping through the net’.

How do victims access service? - The majority of cases go through the Police, and the increase in referrals reflected better recording. In addition, Rotherham Rise took self-referrals which did not require Police or other agency involvement. It was suggested that guidance was re-issued for Members and officers about how referrals could be made.

What work was taking place with older people? – The age profile of victims and perpetrators was reviewed to ensure that resources were allocated appropriately. Adult Safeguarding reviewed the complexity of referrals and the IDVAs were located in Adult Services, which facilitated closer working. Examples were also given about work with carers.

Clarification was sought about the status of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) as a single point of access for domestic abuse and whether this would apply only to victims with children or extended to victims where no children were involved? A further question was asked whether the MASH had the capacity to address this general cohort? – It was explained that the MASH would address safeguarding issues involving children and young people rather than a generic approach. However, work was taking place to ensure that pathways were consistent.

Were frontline officers trained to spot the signs of the domestic abuse? - An e-learning package had been developed for all staff, with more in-depth training developed for frontline staff from both RMBC and partner agencies.

In summing up, the Chair welcomed that domestic abuse had been identified as a clear priority however expressed disappointment about the apparent lack of progress in implementing the recommendations from the 2013 scrutiny review.

Resolved:- (1) That an update be provided to the Select Commission in 6 months to include:-

- Information about how the voice of the victim was captured in the Strategy;
- Outcomes of the peer review;
- Details of the perpetrator programme.

(2) That further consideration be given to investment in women's empowerment and preventative work in school as part of the Strategy's development.

(3) That an update be provided outlining progress in addressing the recommendations of the PEEL review in relation to South Yorkshire Police's response to domestic abuse.

(4) That the Strategy be circulated on completion to the Select Commission prior to the six month's update.

(5) That information be provided on the level of incidents/reports over Christmas period.

74. CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES (CYPS) 2016/2017 YEAR END PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Service, with Ms. R. Wall, Head of Service Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, and Mrs. S. Wilson, Head of Service Performance & Planning, gave a presentation which covered the 2016/17 year-end performance in relation to Early Help and Family Engagement, Children's Social Care and Education and Skills:

What is working well

- Early Help received 3,914 contacts during the last 12 months evidencing the improvements made in embedding Early Help
- Timeliness of engagement with families in Early Help improved from 18.4% to 53.7%
- 98% people who completed the Early Help exit survey rated the Service as good or excellent
- The number of re-referrals into Social Care had decreased evidencing a more robust approach (30.7% to 27.6%)
- Following an increase in demand for assessments to be undertaken, a new team was established and as a result timescales within 45 days improved from 85.9% in February to 92.9% in March 2017
- The number of children in need (CIN) with an up-to-date plan continued to perform well during the year - 93.8% in March 2017 (82.7% overall during the year)
- Completion of Initial Child Protection Conferences in 15 day timescale remained above national average at 91% and reviews were maintained at 100% for 8 months of the year (98.6% for the year overall)
- 86.4% of Looked After Children (LAC) visits (local standard of 4 weeks) improved from 80.2% in 2015/16
- SYP made 17 convictions for Child Sexual Exploitation during the year and 327 referrals were made to post abuse support services
- Early Years Found Stage, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 (progress 8) were all above national average

What are we worried about

- Only 6.5% of Early Help assessments were completed by partners (75 out of 1,150)
- 39.4% of Early Help Assessments completed in 35 working days
- 29% of the targeted range of families for change achieved the Payment By Result outcome
- Section 47 rates are significantly higher than statistical neighbours despite an in year reduction - 251.8/10k pop
- There had been increase of those children on a Child Protection Plan (CPP) who had been made subject to a plan for a second or subsequent time (4.7% to 8.4%)
- A reduction on the number of children on a CPP who had had a visit from 99% to 88.4% during the year
- A reduction in the number of children who were ceasing to be Looked After due to permanence from 40.1% to 28.3%
- Only 68.2% of LAC had an up-to-date Personal Education Plan (PEP)
- A reduction in the number of children who had 3 or more placements, however, this continued to be high (11.3%). There has been a reduction in the number of children who had had a stable placement for over two years (67.6%)

What do we need to do next

- Ensure that the right service at the right time was in place including work across CYPS and partners at all stages of the process particularly around thresholds
- Quality remained a priority and this was a balance with compliance
- Increased level of LAC - It was important to progress the implementation of the sufficiency strategy and other transformational and investment programmes
- Continue to ensure that LAC were placed in family settings (even if this meant a move)

Discussion ensued on the report with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- The reasons behind the dip in performance in the Families for Change programme and what were the achievements of the programme had been so far.
- Levels of engagement with schools, particularly in relation to reducing poor attendance.
- Clarification as to why there were higher than average Section 47 referrals in Rotherham?
- Concerns about re-referrals and quality of decision making and practice in relation to 'stepping down' intervention.
- Improvements in quality of practice as a result of the roll out of 'Signs of Safety'
- The implementation of the Liquid Logic case management system and confidence in accuracy of data.
- Checks and balances in place to ensure that health and dental checks for Looked After children took place on a timely basis.
- Engagement with the Early Help offer in relation to Children's Centres.

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- Levels of referrals with domestic abuse as a presenting factor.
- Areas of improvement from April 2017.

The Chair thanked Officers for the report.

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

75. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That the next schedule meeting be held on Tuesday, 12th September, 2017 at 5.30 p.m.