

**IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION**  
**Tuesday 22 April 2025**

Present:- Councillor Monk (in the Chair); Councillors Baggaley, Brent, Elliott, Fisher, Garnett, Harper, Ryalls and Currie.

Apologies for Absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Pitchley, Knight, Bower, Foster, Hughes and Sutton.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-  
<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

**68. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

**Resolved:** - That the Minutes of the meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission, held on 4 March 2025, be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

**69. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**70. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

There were no items of business on the agenda that required the exclusion of the press and public from the meeting.

**71. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS**

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

**72. DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY 2022-2027 PROGRESS UPDATE**

The item provided an update on the progress towards the Rotherham Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2027, following the previous update presented to the Commission in 2023.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Councillor Cusworth, the Cabinet Member for Children's and Young People's Services who attended the meeting to introduce the report in absence of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Safe and Clean Communities, Emma Ellis, Head of Service for Community Safety and Regulatory Services, Andrew Wells, Head of Safeguarding, Kayleigh Charlton, Community Safety Officer and Kelly

White, LINK Officer for the Commission and Assistant Director for Early Help.

The Chair invited Councillor Cusworth to introduce the report, during which the following was noted:

- The strategy was a working document that was amended frequently to highlight any emerging challenges.
- There had been good progress against the strategy, examples were provided of the targeted campaigns completed towards older populations and seasonal awareness relating to Christmas and football tournaments, which had been running for several years.
- Prevention and education were key parts of the strategy, as well as ensuring a trauma informed approach to services.

The Chair invited the relevant officers to provide the presentation, during which the following was noted:

- Part of the Strategy included the commissioning of domestic abuse services and in October 2022 this process was changed. Rotherham Rise now named Hopian, were commissioned to manage the front door services and high-risk cases, alongside the refuge provision. The in-house service known as the Domestic Abuse Outreach Service (DAAOS), was located in the Safeguarding Service.
- Since the development of the strategy in 2022 and by the end of 2024, 81% of actions were complete.

Drive Change Together-

- The DASH was reformed, to provide better direction around completion and make it more user friendly, and better guidance on how to use it to manage the risk of a victim.
- Eight Steps to Homicide training was commissioned to enhance practitioners' knowledge when assessing risk to a victim, the training also looked at perpetrator's behaviours around key triggers and indicators of escalation.
- There was strengthened data collection, to identify any gaps for campaigns and projects. Key campaigns such as the Domestic Abuse Summer Campaign and Domestic Abuse Older People's

Campaign, were created to challenge unconscious bias around stereotypical victims.

- Non-fatal strangulation training and targeted Health professional training was completed with over 500 GPs and health practitioner. The training was in-line with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 by recognising that non-fatal strangulation was a standalone crime. Non-fatal strangulation training was delivered to front line practitioners to ensure they would have the tools to spot the signs and refer for support.

#### Prevention and Early Intervention-

- The 'Do More' Campaign was launched, which followed on from the 'No More' Campaign. The campaign called for all male bystanders to stop abusive and misogynistic behaviours towards women and girls.
- The Walk Safe App was launched across South Yorkshire to ensure people, in-particular women would feel safer. The app had a tracking feature so trusted friends and family could ensure that a person had got to their intended location safely. It also plotted registered safe places, so routes could be planned with those places in mind.
- An Unpicking Cultural Narratives Workshop was developed alongside Sheffield Hallam University to focus on prevention and early intervention. The university delivered the workshop based on what could be perceived as a victim, focusing on the word 'vulnerable' and changing the narrative that vulnerability was a sign of courage and strength rather than a weakness.
- A new training plan for 2024-2025 had been developed with a four-tiered approach. This would ensure that domestic abuse awareness training would be delivered to all who required it, at the right level. Training would include 'asking the question' and 'risk assessing' and would be delivered at various times across the year.

#### Minimising Harm Via the Provision of Early Help Support for Children, Young People and Families-

- The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 stated that children were victims in their own right. A wide scope of support was offered to children experiencing domestic abuse.
- Operation Encompass in conjunction with South Yorkshire Police

led to 100% of schools being signed up within the borough, plus 53 nurseries. South Yorkshire Police advised there would be a national review of Operation Encompass, to look how processes could be enhanced.

- High Risk incidents were increasing due to better reporting and better professional understanding of risk. However, in order to ensure safety, the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) had increased from two meetings per month to three. This had reduced a back log of nine weeks to four weeks.

#### Responding to Changing Need and Demand-

- There were thirteen specialist domestic abuse properties, which were fully furnished and equipped with target hardening essentials. The properties had supported thirty-five adults and thirty-nine children this year to date, including those still in residence.
- There were ten commissioned refuge units and ten commissioned safer options properties.
- The Homelessness Prevention Fund helped to provide essential funds to 153 families in 2024-2025. Examples were provided of how the fund had purchased essential household items, helped with moving costs and had paid rent arrears to prevent homelessness again.
- Target hardening was provided for 142 properties, to enable survivors to remain safely in their own home.

#### The Next Steps-

- The partnership would aim to develop a better understanding of the family court process and continue to work in partnership to identify the need for direct support for children.
- Work would continue to develop a Survivor Liaison Network, alongside the continuation of training monitoring, and ensuring that a wide range of domestic abuse training would be available to all partners.
- Work would continue to implement and monitor performance and interrogate data to inform any gaps in knowledge or provision.
- Work would continue with Commissioning, to complete the

## Domestic Abuse Pathway Review.

The Chair thanked the relevant officer for the presentation and opened up to questions, during which the following discussions took place:

- Members raised concerns around potential online cultures linked to misogyny and asked officers whether this could form part of any future revised strategy. Re-assurance was provided that this was an area where work was delivered in school settings during PHSE lessons. The Safer Rotherham Partnership Priorities had a specific focus on online crime and included areas such as domestic abuse, knife crime, Prevent and healthy relationships. An example was provided of the Do More Campaign and how the campaign encouraged people not to be a bystander and to challenge certain behaviours.
- The Cranstoun Level Up Programme had received a high number of referrals from one particular school, which had led the data on referrals to peak. This was attributed to targeted work that the service had completed and it was advised that it was common for referrals to increase when strong intervention work was completed. The service saw this as a positive impact of the outreach and engagement completed with schools and communities.
- In relation to the 81% of actions that were completed by the end of 2024, the remaining actions were future actions, which focused on the survivor voice and ensuring that it would be captured better in future.
- A Domestic Homicide Review was a statutory function that was completed in any case where an individual had lost their life as a result of a domestic incident. The review sat alongside Safeguarding Adults Reviews and a near-miss process. The service continually learned from reviews and changed practises and processes to ensure improvements.
- The legislation relating to domestic abuse used the term homicide, however work was being completed to change this to domestic abuse related deaths. This would cover all domestic abuse and suicides where domestic abuse had been present.
- Member's raised concerns that the PowerPoint presented to the Commission only included one visual promotion of a male, which was a poster of a perpetrator. Members advised that they would welcome more promotional posters which highlighted the message

that men were also victims of domestic abuse.

- All data relating to domestic abuse, including the relevant dashboard and action plan, was presented to the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Priority Group, which was a sub-group of the Safer Rotherham Partnership. The group was chaired by the Head of Community and Safety Regulatory Services.
- In relation to the 20% of referrals for domestic abuse support that did not engage with support services, it was clarified that this only measured the non-engagement with Hopian and not wider services. Hopian would attempt three phone calls, send a follow up text and a letter if safe to do so. The national average was that it could take up to fifty incidents for victims of domestic abuse to engage in support.
- There was a designated Community Safety Officer who was responsible for promoting the Walk Safe App, this included promotion with schools.
- The data on referral numbers into the Inspire to Change Course had decreased; this was attributed to the service previously receiving a lot of inappropriate referrals, such as referrals of individuals who did not want to complete the course, or who were not ready to join. The course was 26 weeks in total and required engagement from attendee's, therefore the screening processes were updated to ensure the right referrals were received and included individuals who had the desire and motivation to change. It was advised that the success of the course could not be measured solely on how many people completed the course, success also included what individuals had learned from the course even if they hadn't fully completed it.

**Resolved:** - That the Improving Lives Select Commission:

- 1) Consider the progress towards the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022 – 2027.
- 2) Requests that the eight steps to homicide PowerPoint to be circulated to the Commission.

**73. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered its Work Programme, and the following was noted:

- The work programme for 2024-2025 municipal year was complete and a new work programme would be drafted with the Commission at the beginning of the next municipal year.
- Members were reminded that upon completion of the meeting, there would be a scoping session for the Commission to scope a proposed review on Trauma and Children Missing Education.
- Members were also reminded that there would be an additional workshop held on the 1 May, further details had been circulated via email.

**Resolved:** - That the Work Programme for 2024-2025 be approved.

**74. IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION - SUB AND PROJECT GROUP UPDATES**

There were no sub and project group updates.

**75. URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.