



The Safer **Rotherham**

Safer Rotherham Partnership **Domestic Abuse Strategy** 2017 to 2020

iStock
by Getty Images™

iStock
by Getty Images™

Rotherham
Metropolitan
Borough Council



Foreword

The Safer Rotherham Partnership continues to develop and strengthen, building on the commitments made within the Partnership Plan covering 2016 – 2019. Whilst we collectively accept the scale of the challenges ahead of us, I am pleased to see progress being made against the aims of the partnership and in this case, the development of this strategy to coordinate our efforts in respect of tackling Domestic Abuse.

The Borough of Rotherham covers a district of 110 square miles and has a mix of communities in both rural and urban areas. Centrally placed within South Yorkshire, the population continues to grow and change over time with an increase in the numbers of those aged over 60, who now make up one in four of our residents, and those from minority ethnic groups, who now account for one in ten. This range of communities and the changing nature of them mean our services must continue to adapt to meet demand. To adapt we must ensure that we continue to be informed by feedback, consultation findings and inspection recommendations, whilst responding to a changing national picture, making best use of available interventions for support that help to change behaviour as well as tools and powers.

Across the partnerships in Rotherham, a range of services are commissioned that offer advice and support for victims of domestic abuse alongside refuge provision, housing support and a range of counselling interventions. Despite this provision, we have identified gaps.

In particular our own assessments, alongside external reports, tell us that we need to focus on addressing the following;

- Continue to improve assessment of risk, evidence gathering and action to address offences of domestic abuse
- A focus on tackling offenders and bringing them to justice
- Increased work around prevention and early identification of issues, before abusive situations develop
- Ensuring a strong interface between the children and adults systems and building on existing strengths related to information sharing that facilitates communication across the continuum of need.
- Upskilling agencies to swiftly identify the signs of Domestic Abuse and building consistent, integrated pathways. Embed a culture of learning across the strategic partnership that enables a robust response to emerging research as well as findings from Serious Case Reviews and Domestic Homicide Reviews, whether local or national.

Domestic Abuse continues to be a priority for the Safer Rotherham Partnership. Through the work of the partnership progress has been made in improving delivery of provision but evidence highlights that more is needed and further improvements required. This strategy seeks to harness the energy of the partnership and focus development towards common goals. Making best use of the limited resources available by working together will enable a rigorous and proactive approach to improving the quality of relationships across Rotherham and reducing harm caused by domestic abuse.

Introduction

Whilst we know that Rotherham is a unique place with its own identity and history, there are many parallels in relation to domestic abuse when comparing with the national picture.

According to the Office of National Statistics, during the year 2016, domestic abuse accounted for one in ten calls to Police with a total 1.03 million reports. Of these reports, four in every ten were identified as being a domestic abuse -related criminal offence. With significant levels of underreporting suspected, and confirmed by victims and survivors, it is clear that this issue affects many lives and many families across the country.

The national picture is consistent in Rotherham, where reports of domestic abuse continue to rise. South Yorkshire Police received 6,500 calls relating to domestic abuse during 2016, a rise of 5.7% in comparison to 2015 (6152). Recorded domestic-related crime also rose by 28% locally in 15/16 and estimates suggest over 27,000 women and girls in the Rotherham area have suffered abuse in their lifetime and while we know this issue does not only affect women, we do recognise the increased prevalence. Whilst increases in reporting are positive, in the context of suspected underreporting, we need to do more to understand the true scale of domestic abuse. The number of crimes has risen by 22% from 1562 in 2014/15 to 1900 in 2015/16. In relation to cases, during 2016 we recorded 431 high risk victims, 1722 medium risk victims and 4373 victims requiring lower levels of support. As a result of these increases, there is a challenge for services in meeting demand effectively. During 2016/17, there were 3914 contacts for families to the early help Service and 'family relationships' are amongst the top three cited needs. Almost a third (32.5%) of cases

are identified by social care services or the police, suggesting missed opportunities for earlier identification and intervention. Young people are also at risk of suffering or perpetrating domestic abuse within teenage relationships, according to a report conducted by the South Yorkshire Criminal Justice Board which made a number of recommendations to support closer working between domestic abuse and teenage services.

Alongside the statistical data the partnership is supported by a range of inspections and quality assurance frameworks that provide insight into these services and inform valuable learning for the partnership. This work includes inspections of the Police, such as the PEEL inspection, partnership inspections, Domestic Homicide and Serious Case reviews alongside themed reviews known as 'Deep-Dive' inspections and inspections by agencies such as Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission. Commissioners at Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) requested an audit into Children who are at risk of domestic abuse, which concluded in June 2017.

Recent reviews reinforce the data and have suggested that routes into services can be confusing and at times, agencies have missed opportunities to spot the early signs where intervening at an early stage could have improved situations. The range of people and agencies that can be involved in cases and in assessing risk means that the information may not always be accessible and we may not properly understand the full picture for victims or perpetrators. This may be exacerbated by families not feeling involved with the process of making decisions individually, or collectively informing the services. A lack of consistency in the application of assessment tools and processes, such as early help and DASH, limits

any feelings of consistency for families and reduces visibility of need to agencies. Further work with perpetrators is also required both to prevent and address unacceptable behaviour, both as a community, alongside using legal powers available.

There has been some significant progress made by agencies in recent years including higher levels of both generic and specialist training, in particular the Police have received specialist training in relation to victims of domestic abuse. Partners continue to commission various services which total £444,000 and range from refuge through to floating support and have supported a total of 532 victims during the last financial year. The partnership has recently been awarded an additional £200,000 in order to better support victims fleeing domestic abuse, who have complex needs. The SRP have also commissioned Salford City Council to conduct a peer review into domestic abuse service, which will commence in 2017.

The strategic partnership recognises and seeks to further understand the drivers and impact of domestic abuse and this strategy will focus on the gaps identified by the partnership, through a range of sources, and seek to improve services for the benefit of the people and communities impacted by conflictual relationships and domestic abuse. The strategic vision is informed by local evidence and has been developed to accelerate change and improve outcomes.



Current Provision

There is a range of commissioned, voluntary and charity funded services that exist within Rotherham. These services provide a range of functions that are important to supporting delivery of domestic abuse services.

Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) are commissioned by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and support those affected by domestic abuse that are assessed as high risk. A local charity, Rotherham Rise, is commissioned to deliver a range of services for medium and standard risk victims alongside providing housing support and a refuge. There are a number of outreach, voluntary and counselling services that support those impacted by domestic abuse including some which target support to minority communities and those with protected characteristics. There are currently around 350 victims being supported across this range of services. The South Yorkshire Community Rehabilitation Company (SYCRC) currently runs a number of perpetrator programmes for those convicted of relevant offences, such as the Accredited Building Better Relationships programme and non-accredited short duration Respectful Relationships programme. SYCRC currently work with approximately 450 identified perpetrators of domestic abuse within the County.

Vision

In Rotherham we do not tolerate domestic abuse and as agencies, we will consistently identify risk, work to protect victims and address offending behaviour. In communities, we will promote the value of positive relationships and identify need, in order to focus on preventing conflict and abusive behaviours. Our services will work together, be responsive, evidence based and informed by those affected. Rotherham's approach seeks to focus on improving the quality of relationships in the borough, whilst working to protect and support those already affected by domestic abuse.

Aims

The Gap:

Identified weaknesses in assessing risk in criminal or civil justice settings, gathering evidence and use of tools and powers, including legal powers.

The Aim:

Support cohesive, shared assessment processes that enable services to understand need and embed the message that domestic abuse is unacceptable and that perpetrators of domestic abuse crime will be brought to justice and offered intervention to change behaviour to prevent reoffending.

The Gap:

A reactive, costly approach that tackles symptoms and not root causes of domestic abuse.

The Aim:

Focus on the provision of services that support positive relationships through early identification of need and addressing conflict before abusive situations occur and impact negatively across communities.

The Gap:

Pathways for those adults affected by domestic abuse are duplicative and confused and this makes sharing information and the provision of coordinated, timely support a challenge. The pathway must be accessible for all.

The Aim:

Review the system and redesign the adult pathway, replicating best practice.

Aims

The Gap:

Not all agencies are quick to identify domestic abuse; they don't always fulfil responsibility of using shared assessments or put people in touch with the right services. At times we are unsure who is the victim and we know that this can change within abusive relationships, service must be able to respond to this changing picture.

The Aim:

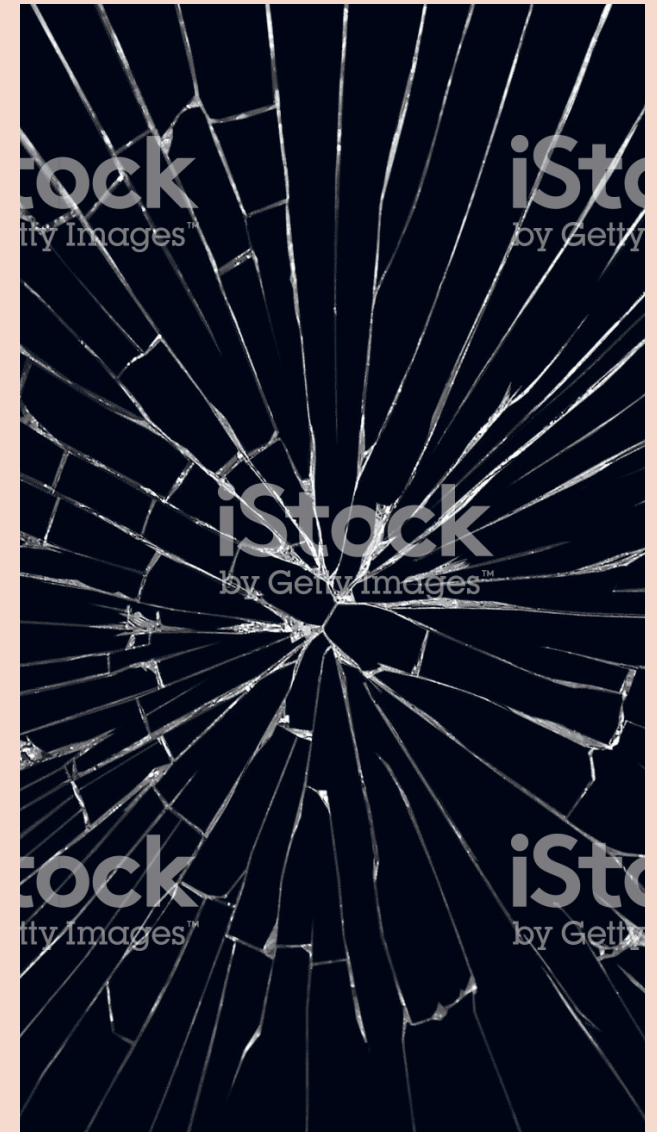
Make every contact count (MECC), wherever people access support, providing effective support.

The Gap:

We have not always been quick to act on lessons learnt. We want to be quicker at responding and delivering more together, using our now well established and strong leadership in Rotherham as a catalyst for change. We want those affected by domestic abuse to have a voice and inform our services.

The Aim:

Identify lessons, listen to victims, promote challenge and respond as a partnership.



Objectives

Support cohesive, shared assessment processes that enable services to understand need and embed the message that domestic abuse is unacceptable and that perpetrators of domestic abuse crime will be brought to justice and offered intervention to change behaviour to prevent reoffending.

Whilst domestic abuse continues to rise in terms of incidents reported, it is widely accepted that this does not represent the true level of incidents within Rotherham or across the Country. Whilst there may often be a combination of reasons as to why someone may choose not to report, this can often be influenced by peoples trust in the system and belief that there will not be an effective response. Victims want assurances that partners would make them safer, as opposed to placing them in any more risk. To achieve the best outcomes, we have to act under the same principles and process.

In order to deliver against this objective, the partnership will focus on the following areas;

- Embed an approach that focuses on prevention rather than cure
- Seek innovate ways to support those affected by domestic abuse, learning from research and applying evidence based methodology to the services that we commission
- Increase the appropriate use of tools and powers to address domestic violence
- Seek to prevent future perpetrators through education and effective intervention
- Promote understanding of positive relationships, the impact of couple conflict and domestic abuse across agencies and communities

Focus on the provision of services that support positive relationships through early identification of need and addressing conflict before abusive situations occur and impact negatively across communities.

We are clear in our determination to protect victims of domestic abuse but a key objective, for long term, sustainable change is to apply a preventative approach in Rotherham. In order to reduce the incidence of abusive relationships we need to offer support at the earliest juncture by joining with partners and communities to promote positive relationships. Research shows that adults in distressed relationships are much more like to suffer from depression, anxiety and other mental health problems as well as poor physical health. There is also clear evidence that poor-quality parental relationships and inter-parental conflict, for those with children have a negative impact on children's mental health and long-term life chances. Negative relationships also have clear economic consequences, in terms of increased costs to the public purse through responding in reactive rather than proactive ways. Investing in support for the promotion of good-quality relationships makes economic sense for Rotherham at a time when pressures to public funding are high.

- Commission interventions that focus on prevention of risk and future harm
- Commission intervention that breaks cycles of abuse and harm
- Identify groups at risk and deliver preventative interventions
- Promote positive relationships
- Identify individual and community based strengths that could be further developed

Objectives

Review the system and redesign the adult pathway, replicating best practice

Various inspections and 'deep-dive' reviews have revealed that the partnership would benefit from working more effectively together in order to ensure that we spot the signs, maximise opportunities to intervene and share relevant information swiftly and effectively across partners. Key to addressing domestic abuse is having a common understanding of what it is, what our collective response should be and how we work together.

In order to deliver against this objective, the partnership will focus on the following areas;

- Support the development of the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) in order to ensure that it supports and protects our most vulnerable people
- Continue to strengthen information sharing
- Develop a multi-agency pathway
- Enable effective joint commissioning

Make every contact count, wherever people access, providing effective support

Domestic abuse may present in a number of different ways whether that be through access to health, crime and anti-social behaviour or as a family in crisis. The multitude of ways in which this issue could present highlight the critical need for partners to ensure that they are alert to domestic abuse, will handle victims or perpetrators appropriately and engage the relevant processes.

- Make sure the system works, wherever people access
- Ensure front line staff within all agencies are trained
- Support the development of the MADA



Objectives

Identify lessons and respond as a partnership

Alongside proactive improvement to the system, it is also a critical function of this partnership to ensure that any available learning is captured and responded to. Alongside statutory process in relation to DHRs, serious case reviews, themed reviews, audits and external inspections are often relevant to this area of work. As a partnership we want to ensure we are as effective as possible, this involves challenging ourselves, and each other, to ensure the best possible service. Where there are lesson, we will respond collectively to change practice.

- Oversee the delivery of actions relating to DHRs
- Seek to provide our own quality assurance framework
- Deliver responses as a partnership



Delivery

Strategy

This strategy has been developed by the Domestic Abuse Priority Group, on behalf of the Safer Rotherham Partnership. The purpose of having this strategy is to clearly identify our gaps and areas for improvement and allow us to focus on them together. As highlighted within this document partnership work is key to our success and this strategy will therefore become the driving force in respect of improvements to domestic abuse services.

Performance

Periodic updates in relation to progress will be expected by the SRP Performance and Delivery Group (PAD). Suitable performance indicators will be identified in order to support each aim and again, periodic updates will be provided. Alongside managing performance, the partnership will seek to manage any risks that exist in respect of delivery against the strategy.

Action Plans

A robust action plan will be developed to support this strategy. The action plan will be driven by the aims and objectives contained within this strategy and will identify specific actions needed in order to support each aim and deliver success.



