

## Summary Sheet

### **Name of Committee and Date of Committee Meeting**

Cabinet and Commissioners' Decision Making Meeting – 19 February 2018

### **Report Title**

The Safer Rotherham Partnership (SRP) Domestic Abuse Strategy 2017 - 2020

### **Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

No, this is not a key decision

### **Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Damien Wilson, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment

### **Report Author(s)**

Sam Barstow, Head of Community Safety, Resilience and Emergency Planning  
Steve Parry, ASB and Crime Manager

### **Ward(s) Affected**

All

## Summary

The Safer Rotherham Partnership (SRP) is at a critical stage of its journey with regards to domestic abuse (DA), whilst a power of direction is maintained by Commissioners. This retained power reflects some of the challenges in respect of domestic abuse, where there have been critical posts vacant for some time, which has meant the partnership drive has not existed in a structured and coordinated manner. Things have moved on significantly over the previous year, with a Domestic Abuse Coordinator now in post, a functioning partnership group, new strategic lead and a clear strategic approach.

The Partnership Strategy presented with this report seeks to enhance the co-ordinated response to domestic abuse in Rotherham, led by the SRP. One of the most important aspects of responding effectively to domestic abuse is that it cannot be achieved by any single agency operating in isolation.

This report and accompanying strategy sets out how the SRP wants everyone who works with families experiencing domestic abuse to identify domestic abuse and work together to tackle it. It provides clear expectations and a course of action which will make a difference to addressing this issue and help support people to change their lives.

**Recommendation**

That the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2017-2020 be endorsed.

**List of Appendices Included**

Appendix 1: SRP Domestic Abuse Strategy 2017 -2020.

**Background Papers**

None

**Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

The strategy was approved by the Safer Rotherham Partnership Board in October 2017 and also presented to Improving Lives Select Commission on the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2017.

**Council Approval Required**

No

**Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

# **The Safer Rotherham Partnership (SRP) Domestic Abuse Strategy 2017 – 2020**

## **1. Recommendations**

1.1 That the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2017-2020 be endorsed.

## **2. Background**

2.1 According to the Office of National Statistics, during 2016, domestic abuse incidents accounted for one in ten calls to the Police with a total of 1.03 million reports. Of these reported incidents, four in every ten were identified as being domestic abuse related criminal offences and recorded as crimes. Whilst this evidence illustrates these issues affect many lives and families across the country, it is likely that there are significant levels of under reporting of incidents which is confirmed by victims and survivors of domestic abuse.

2.2 The situation in Rotherham is consistent with the national picture and reports of domestic abuse are continuing to rise. South Yorkshire Police received 6,500 calls relating to domestic abuse during 2016, a rise of 5.7% compared to 2015 (6,152).

2.3 Recorded domestic abuse related crime also rose by 28% locally in 2015/16 and estimates suggest over 27,000 women and girls in the Rotherham area have suffered abuse in their lifetime. Whilst men can also be affected by domestic violence, the number of incidents is more prevalent amongst females.

2.4 Across the partnerships in Rotherham there are a range of commissioned services that offer support and advice to victims of domestic abuse in addition to refuge provision, housing support and a range of counselling interventions. In particular, the Council's own assessments alongside external reports, illustrates the need to focus on addressing the following:

- Continue to improve assessment of risk and take action to address offences of domestic abuse
- Focus on tackling offenders and bringing them to justice
- Increase work around prevention and early identification of issues, before abusive situations develop
- Ensure a strong interface between children and adults services recording and case management systems and building on existing strengths relating to information sharing that facilitates communication across the continuum of need of a victim of domestic abuse
- Upskill staff in partner agencies to swiftly identify signs of domestic abuse and build consistent integrated pathways to facilitate the most appropriate service provision.
- Embed a culture of learning across the partnership that enables a robust response to emerging research, as well as findings from local and national serious case reviews and domestic homicide reviews.

2.5 The SRP has for some time been without an effective strategy in this area. Not only has it lacked strategic focus but it has also had critical posts vacant, such as the Domestic Abuse Coordinator and strategic lead, which has also led to a weakened partnership. Despite this there has been some continued effort to develop delivery within services.

- 2.6 For several months now, progress has been made at pace. This progress has included the appointment of a Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator, the reformation of a partnership strategic group, the development of the attached strategy and a robust action plan in support. Alongside these strategic elements of delivery, partners have also delivered practically, with a South Yorkshire-wide perpetrator programme due to start in February, revisions to a raft of policies and procedures and development of a multi-agency protocol (detailing the whole domestic abuse support system) and charter.
- 2.7 Alongside the above, the SRP has also identified a 'critical friend' (the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council) and has undertaken a 'peer review' in to Domestic Abuse services, the assessment for which was held on the 25<sup>th</sup> January. This review explored all areas of domestic abuse delivery. Early feedback received from the assessment team suggests that the SRP has some strengths, one of which being the political and managerial leadership in this area. Additionally the SRP clearly has some challenges, many of which have been successfully identified by the partnership, with work underway to improve.
- 2.8 Domestic abuse continues to be a priority for the SRP and although progress has been made improving delivery of domestic abuse services, more needs to be done to improve provision which this strategy seeks to achieve. The need to do more is reflected by the current reservation of a power of direction in this area, by Commissioners.
- 2.9 The strategy has been considered by Members of the Improving Lives Select Committee and was approved by the Safer Rotherham Partnership Board in October 2017.
- 2.10 Partners are acutely aware of the need to engage with victims, survivors and service users to inform the strategic approach and delivery. This is also something that has been highlighted by elected members through the Improving Lives Select Commission and is a key piece of work for the partnership.
- 2.11 Currently, partners are mapping out the range of groups and forums and will be doing a 'road show' with the domestic abuse strategy and delivery plan, taking feedback and identifying key individuals to form a Rotherham-wide forum. This will be led by the chair of the Domestic Abuse Priority Group, who is the Head of Community Safety.
- 2.12 Alongside meeting and hearing from service users directly, it is also key that the SRP identifies a systematic way of capturing feedback, across partnership agencies. In support of this, the SRP is currently identifying and amending satisfaction forms to incorporate a similar question. That question will then inform the SRP, across agencies, in relation to satisfaction, whilst also showing areas where there is good practice or practice that requires improvements.

### **3. Options considered and recommended proposal**

- 3.1 The SRP Domestic Abuse Strategy 2017-2020 has been approved by the SRP Board and as such it is recommended that Cabinet Members endorse the strategy.

#### **4. Timetable and accountability for implementing the decision**

4.1 Implementation of the strategy will be overseen by the SRP Domestic Abuse Priority Group.

#### **5. Finance and procurement implications**

5.1 There are no additional financial implications for the Council's revenue budget arising from the introduction of this strategy.

#### **6. Legal implications**

6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

#### **7. Human Resources implications**

7.1 Training for the workforce will be required to ensure staff have the knowledge and skills to identify the different forms of domestic abuse. In addition, the workforce will benefit from training to enable them to support the aims of the strategy. It is also likely that the strategy will lead to requests for mandatory training for some employees, with enhanced training for front-line practitioners.

#### **8. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

8.1 The Council has statutory obligations surrounding the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults and the Council may also have statutory homelessness duties in relation to some victims of domestic abuse under Part vii of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).

#### **9. Equalities and Human Rights Implications**

9.1 The decision maker must be aware of their obligations under Section 149 Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). It obliges public authorities, when exercising their functions, to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct which the Act prohibits and advance equality of opportunity, foster good relations between people who share relevant protected characteristics and those who do not.

9.2 The relevant protected characteristics under the Equality Act are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The duty also covers marriage and civil partnerships, but only in respect of eliminating unlawful discrimination

#### **10. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates**

10.1 There are no additional implications arising from this report.

#### **11. Risks and Mitigation**

11.1 Tackling domestic abuse continues to be a high priority for the Council, Police and wider SRP. It is therefore important to have an action plan, performance framework and delivery structure to implement the strategy and help contribute to the protection of our communities from abuse and bring offenders to justice.

**12. Accountable Officer(s)**

Damien Wilson, Strategic Director, Regeneration and Environment.

Sam Barstow, Head of Community Safety, Resilience and Emergency Planning

Approvals obtained on behalf of:-

	<b>Named Officer</b>	<b>Date</b>
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services	Judith Badger	01.02.2018
Assistant Director of Legal Services	Dermot Pearson	31.01.2018
Head of Procurement (if appropriate)	N/A	
Head of Human Resources (if appropriate)	N/A	

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