

Improving Lives Select Commission

Domestic Abuse Update

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

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Paul Woodcock, Regeneration and Environment

Report Author(s)

Sam Barstow
Head of Community Safety, Resilience and Emergency Planning

Ward(s) Affected

All

Summary

This report provides an update in relation to audit work conducted in support of the Council's work to tackle Domestic Abuse. This report also provides an overview of service user engagement, the current Domestic Abuse service review and a general update in relation to progress against the Domestic Abuse strategy. Finally, it provides a short update in relation to Stalking and Harassment.

Recommendations

- Improving Lives Select Commission note the content of the report.
- A further report is provided to ILSC in respect of the principles for the DA service, prior to reporting to the Council's Cabinet.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix A – Engagement plan for Domestic Abuse review (as previously circulated)
Appendix B – Safer Rotherham Partnership Domestic Abuse Strategy

Background Papers

No

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Domestic Abuse Update

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Improving Lives Select Commission (ILSC) notes the content of the report.
- 1.2 A further report is provided to ILSC in respect of the principles for the DA service, prior to reporting to the Council's Cabinet.

2. Background

- 2.1. Domestic abuse remains a key priority for the Council and its partners, through the Safer Rotherham Partnership (SRP). This report follows previous reports to this Committee throughout 2017 and 2018 and also prior to that. The last report to this Committee was presented in July 2018.

3. Introduction

- 3.1 Following previous discussions at the Improving Lives Select Commission, officers were tasked with providing an update in relation to audit activity in support of continuous improvement within Domestic Abuse (DA) services. At the time there was an on-going review of DA cases within the Council's Housing Service, a further planned audit in respect of Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) recommendations and early discussions with South Yorkshire Police in relation to audit/review activity of Police incidents and investigations.
- 3.2 In relation to wider engagement, members of the Improving Lives Select Commission (ILSC) were clear in their expectation of improved wider service user engagement and that this would inform the future shape of the service. As a part of the current review officers have engaged in focus groups, commissioned a public survey, a professional's survey and additionally, engaged with current and potential providers of DA services. Further information is provided in the body of this report and follows a briefing note circulated to ILSC members in November 2018, which is attached as appendix A.
- 3.3 Following the adoption of stalking and harassment within the priorities of the Safer Rotherham Partnership, alongside a previous recommendation by the ILSC, this report also details progress in relation to developing this area of business.

4. Partnership Audits

4.1 Housing

As previously reported to ILSC, officers have engaged in a supportive review of housing DA practice, with a specific focus on tenancy issues linked to DA. This review was brought about through recognition of the key role that Housing play in relation to DA, alongside a clear appetite from Housing management to continue to learn and improve the service, reflecting on lessons learnt. Over the years, it has been a fairly consistent area of thought within many mainstream services, that supporting victims and survivors to flee domestic abuse by facilitating a move is often the best option. Increasingly there is a desire to

support victims/survivors of DA, and their families, to stay in their own home, properly protected and supported to do so; in particular where mothers and children are concerned and, in all circumstances, only where it can be made safe to do so. Clearly there will always remain a place and need for supporting victims/survivors to flee and the Council and its partners will continue to support this where necessary.

- 4.2 The review of cases, supported by a range of workshops with various housing teams/officers demonstrated that, for all the right intentions of officers, the preferred option in relation to managing victims was to support a move. In addition the proper processes often weren't applied consistently. In some cases, the risk level would have supported options to improve home security, and to work with enforcement colleagues to offer improved protection from perpetrators to support the victim to stay within the home.
- 4.3 As a result of the work done with Housing colleagues, a revised procedure has been developed and implemented which involves enhanced management oversight, changes to termination process, rent allowances and improvements to how furniture is re-used within furnished properties. This work was concluded at the end of July 2018 and was supported by the Housing management team, who implemented the revised processes. August 2018 saw a slight reduction in costs associated with temporary moves linked to DA. Further monitoring will take place at the end of the financial year.

4.4 **Domestic Homicide Reviews**

Throughout July and August work was undertaken to review previous and current Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs), with a particular focus on any consistencies identified within the reviews. This work was subsequently reported to the Council's Strategic Leadership Team and Cabinet Members. Agencies, led by the Council, have conducted five DHRs since the legislation was introduced in 2004. There are a number of recurring themes, which came as no surprise to the partnership:

- In all but one case, the victim and perpetrator had separated, were separating or had separated in the past;
- In three of the five cases there was a combination of substance misuse and mental health issues (dual diagnosis);
- In all but one of the cases the perpetrator had some record of mental health illness noted on agency files;
- Three of the five cases were known to DA service and the Police, and had been heard at the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).

- 4.5 Alongside the above, officers have also reviewed completion of actions across all previous DHRs and will seek to ensure those lessons are embedded within service delivery. Across all five DHRs, there are a total of 26 recommendations, which include those arising from the current active review. Of those 26, 20 are complete, one remains ongoing and a further five require validation but are expected to be completed.

- 4.6 Discussions are ongoing to agree a scope with South Yorkshire Police to work together to explore the application of partnership processes during the response and investigation stages of domestic abuse incidents. Again this is not as a result of identified weakness, but based on a collective desire to continue to learn and improve.

5. Domestic Abuse Service Review

- 5.1 As previously reported to ILSC, the Safer Rotherham Partnership is conducting an in depth review of DA services across the Borough, led by the Council but inclusive of partner organisations. As stated within the previous report, the Domestic Abuse Partnership strategy was agreed in December 2017. One of the gaps identified by the strategy was that:

“...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.”

This led to the following aim being agreed and captured within the strategy:

“[To] review the system and redesign the adult pathway, replicating best practice”

- 5.2 The whole system review clearly demonstrates delivery against this element of the DA strategy and the first phase is nearing completion. Again, as previously reported, the process has involved significant efforts to engage service users through focus groups and online surveys. The online survey, which closed on 24th December 2018, generated 101 responses, with 142 professional responses to a separate survey. There were a total of 27 attendee’s across three focus groups. Officers have also benchmarked services with neighbouring authorities. Some of the key feedback is listed below:

- A more systemic approach would be preferable, with each service user being assigned a key worker who will stay with them, throughout their journey, no matter what their current risk assignment.
- Victims/survivors have to repeat their stories a number of times
- A number of service users thought that there were not enough sessions offered (within specialist support services) to meet their needs, and that courses were therefore not needs led or person centred.
- There is some fear amongst service users that disclosure will lead to their children being removed.
- There is a lack of information in some Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities in relation to domestic abuse services, and in some areas of the service there is a language barrier that is inconsistently supported.

- 5.3 Full analysis of the survey will be available towards the end of January 2019 and will be used to further inform the final report, which is due to be discussed at the SRP Board on the 11th February 2019. The draft report is currently with the Domestic Abuse Priority Group (DAPG), a partnership group which reports

in to the SRP Board, chaired by the Head of Community Safety. It proposes a number of principles in relation to how the service should be shaped in the future, based on the work done to date. Subject to agreement of these principles, the Council will seek to form proposals in relation to how the service could be adapted to meet the principles agreed. This is likely to require some level of change but there will be a number of options as to how this can be delivered. Officers are anticipating reporting to Cabinet in April 2019.

6. Strategy Update

6.1 Following adoption of its strategy in December 2017, the Council and its partners have delivered on significant elements. The strategy can be found at appendix B for information. The key activity is outlined in the following paragraphs, in a chronological order following the date of adoption of the strategy. The aims within the strategy are listed below and the numbers will be referenced within the following paragraphs to link activity back to the strategic aims:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Review the system and redesign the adult pathway, replicating best practice.
4. Make every contact count, wherever people access support, providing effective support.
5. Identify lessons, listen to victims, promote challenge and respond as a partnership.

6.2 Between January and March 2018, the Council and its partners were subject to an in-depth peer review by the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council and its partners. This review examined domestic abuse services within Rotherham against 53 assessment areas with the final date of inspection taking place on the 25th January 2018. The team from Bradford included: the Assistant Director of Performance Partnerships Commissioning who led the review; the DA Coordinator; the Clinical Commissioning Group funded Health DA Coordinator; Bradford Social Care MASH Service Manager; two police officers from the MASH; a representative from adult commissioning; the Chief Executive of Keighley Domestic Violence Services; and Bradford's Head of Targeted Early Help. Bradford colleagues were supported in the review by the Sector Led Improvement Lead, Rob Mayall (ADCS). The team undertook fourteen interviews and focus groups, hearing from a total of nearly sixty multi-agency staff and service users as part of the challenge day. This work delivered in particular against aim 4 of the strategy and additionally provided valuable information to support aim 3.

- 6.3 During March 2018, the Safer Rotherham Partnership, alongside colleagues from across South Yorkshire, launched a Perpetrator programme. This complemented the existing perpetrator programmes delivered by probation post-conviction, by introducing a pre-conviction service and focussing on positive relationships. This complemented the pre-existing perpetrator programme delivered by Rotherham Rise and provided choice for victims/survivors and professionals. This will also provide a strong position in order to evaluate differing models when considering provision post 2019/20 financial year. In particular, these elements support aims 1, 2 and 4.
- 6.4 A consistent training offer has been developed and remains on offer and accessible to all agencies free of charge. Work has also been delivered to develop the private sector including dentists (who may be likely to treat injured parties), alongside other businesses. Further work needs to be done in this area throughout 2019/20. Alongside offering strong training provision, the partnership has also developed a training needs assessment tool in order to understand training needs in relation to DA and respective compliance with training needs across the partnership. This activity strengthens governance and assurance and in particular supports aim 4.
- 6.5 As referenced above, audit/review work on cases and processes within Housing took place during July and August 2018, resulting in adjustments to processes. Similarly, the audit of DHRs has focussed minds around key issues which will inform recommendations as a result of the DA service review. These elements clearly deliver against aims 5 and 3.
- 6.6 During the latter part of 2018, a programme of work has been led by the District Commander for South Yorkshire Police to increase arrest rates, which has been reviewed within the DAPG. As a result, arrest rates have been steadily rising (around 10% increase between May 18 and December 18) and similarly, satisfaction has almost doubled, with rates between April and November 18 delivering 93% satisfied. This work supports aim 1 and is combined with increases in the use of DA enforcement powers, alongside the perpetrator programme.
- 6.7 Finally, the DA service review referenced above will clearly support delivery of a number of aims and will also provide future direction for the strategy, the current version of which will conclude in 2019.

7. Stalking and Harassment

- 7.1 Initial governance has been established in relation to stalking and harassment and performance on outcome rates is now reported to the SRP Board. Unfortunately this data is currently un-audited so cannot be publicly released and work is ongoing to address this however, levels are broadly stable during the first two quarters of monitoring in 2018/19. Additionally, demand numbers are likely to increase as a result of changes to Home Office counting rules. The changes require police forces to record an additional offence of stalking, harassment or coercive control (as appropriate) to a reported crime of criminal damage for example, where it is associated. This change is welcomed by the partnership.

7.2 Stalking and harassment is not always domestic related and in cases that aren't, support is likely to be more limited. Work is underway to map the victim journey following initial report. Through case work, the Head of Community Safety has become involved in delivering challenge on stalking and harassment cases and on one recent occasion, strong practice has been demonstrated by the Police. However, even on this occasion, the victim nevertheless felt that wider support was lacking.

7.3 Following establishment of a referral pathway and available support, officers will seek to arrange partnership training in the 2019/20 financial year. This is an area in need of further development.

8. Key Issues

8.1 Whilst there has been strong delivery against all areas of the Strategy, work needs to continue at its current pace in order to deliver one of the most significant elements; the DA service review.

8.2 Further work is required to develop the understanding of referral pathways for victims of stalking or harassment and, crucially, to identify any unmet need.

9. Recommendations

9.1 Improving Lives Select Commission note the contents of the report.

9.2 A further report is provided to Improving Lives Select Commission in respect of the principles for the DA service, prior to reporting to the Councils cabinet.

10. Financial and Procurement Implications

10.1 This report does not present any decisions and there are no additional financial or procurement implications.

11. Legal Implications

11.1 This report does not present any decisions and there are no legal implications.

12. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

12.1 There are wide-ranging impacts as a result of domestic abuse on children, young people and vulnerable adults. Not only can the impact be physical, but abuse of any form can have long lasting psychological impacts. A range of professionals who work with young people are represented on the DA priority group and there is a process of continuous assurance in place through the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. In respect of vulnerable adults, again there are a range of professionals represented and assurance is provided through the Safeguarding Adults Board. The DA group continuously consider implications relating to children, young people and vulnerable adults and will continue to ensure services are fit for purpose in this regard.

13. Equalities and Human Rights Implications

13.1 The partnership continues to monitor data in relation to equal access to services. There is a bespoke commissioned service for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Groups.

14. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

14.1 Implications for partners and other Directorates are considered on an ongoing basis by all partners represented within the DA priority group and Safer Rotherham Partnership.

15. Risks and Mitigation

15.1 Domestic abuse presents risks to individuals alongside organisational risks relating to good quality service provision. The work outlined above seeks to continue to improve services whilst at the same time, providing assurance as to the effectiveness of current provision.

16. Accountable Officer(s)

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

Tom Smith, Assistant Director, Community Safety and Street Scene

Approvals Obtained from:-

	Named Officer	Date
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services	No implications	
Assistant Director of Legal Services	No implications	

Report Author: Sam Barstow, Head of Community Safety

This report is published on the Council's website or can be found at:-

<http://moderngov.rotherham.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?Categories=>