

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

7. Meeting:	Cabinet
8. Date:	6th November 2013
9. Title:	Scrutiny Review of Domestic Abuse
10. Directorate:	Resources

5. Summary

This report sets out the main findings and recommendations of the scrutiny review of domestic abuse services in Rotherham. The draft review report is attached as Appendix 1 for consideration by Cabinet.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 That Cabinet receives the report and recommendations.**
- 6.2 That Cabinet agrees to forward the report to the Safer Rotherham Partnership for their consideration.**
- 6.3 That Cabinet agrees to forward the report to the Health and Wellbeing Board for their consideration.**
- 6.4 That Cabinet's response to the recommendations is fed back to OSMB within two months of the report submission.**

7. Proposals and Details

7.1 At its meeting on 23 January 2013 the Improving Lives Select Commission agreed to undertake a scrutiny review of domestic abuse services in Rotherham. Domestic abuse has been the subject of previous scrutiny reviews in 2002 and 2005 and with many recent policy changes both locally and nationally it was considered an opportune time to revisit this area of work. An initial presentation was received by the Commission at its meeting in April 2013 to 'set the scene' and provide an overview of the national and local context.

7.2 A wide number of services currently deliver domestic abuse-related support within Rotherham; across local authority, criminal justice, health and voluntary sector services. It is important that a co-ordinated approach is taken across partner agencies to ensure the provision of adequate and timely support through effective use of resources. The aim of the review was to establish how well different agencies work together to support women and men and their families who have experienced domestic abuse, in order to address any service gaps and areas of duplication, identify opportunities to work more effectively and efficiently, and to respond to future challenges.

The review focused on the following areas:

- What does a 'good' service look like? (drawing on national guidance and best practice elsewhere)
- How well partners work together at a strategic level
- How well groups work together operationally
- How well we listen to the voice of the victim and their families

7.3 A full review was carried out, chaired by Cllr Jo Burton, and evidence gathering commenced in April 2013, concluding in July 2013. This comprised a number of evidence sessions involving Cabinet Members, officers from various council services, the manager of the domestic abuse team in Sheffield and witnesses from partner agencies. More detail on the participants and focus of the individual sessions is included in Appendix 1 of the review report.

7.4 There are twenty recommendations, which are contained in Section 7 of the full report. The focus is towards developing a more integrated domestic abuse service as mentioned above, with clear protocols and pathways for all risk levels that are understood by every partner agency. Domestic abuse also needs to be integrated at a strategic level to ensure other workstreams are addressing the impact it has on victims and families. In summary, the recommendations cover the following areas:

Commissioning and funding – mainstreaming funding for the IDVAS; carrying out an audit of need for domestic abuse support and services; exploring joint commissioning and joint funding of services and training; and considering the feasibility of more integrated working through a "one stop shop" or "golden number".

Strategy – as a priority for SRP domestic abuse should be explicit within other key strategies when they are refreshed; workstreams for drugs and alcohol need to take account of domestic abuse; sexual violence in non-domestic settings should be more integrated in work on violence against women and girls; and links with local organisations who work with 16-17 year olds need to be strengthened.

Roles and responsibilities – reviewing the structures, communications and governance arrangements with the SRP to clarify and reaffirm roles and responsibilities.

Protocol and process – ensuring the ACPO DASH risk assessment form is used by all agencies; developing a standard multi-agency protocol and process for contacting victims at all risk levels to avoid duplication; and developing a similar protocol and process for standard/medium risk assessments to ensure consistency and common pathways.

Prevention and early intervention – developing a perpetrator programme to comply with the Specialist Domestic Violence Court components; reviewing resource allocation in order to focus on standard/medium risk cases to prevent escalation to high risk; and continuing to raise awareness with young people about coercive relationships and domestic abuse, reviewing who is best placed to deliver the training.

Forced marriage and so called “honour” based violence – to be the subject of a separate review by Improving Lives Select Commission in 2014.

8. Finance

One of the review aims was to consider effective and efficient use of resources. The recommendations from the Select Commission will require further exploration by Cabinet, the Strategic Leadership Team and Partner agencies on the cost, risks and benefits of their implementation.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

In addition to tragic incidents of domestic homicide and serious injury, domestic abuse is fundamentally linked to other social problems, such as poor mental health, substance misuse, or homelessness. Its impact on children is also profound with it being a major factor in child abuse and neglect, issues of sexual exploitation, and adolescent violence.

Domestic abuse has a considerable affect on services in terms of monetary cost and in the long term harmful effects, physical, psychological and emotional, on primary victims (both women and men) and their children. The ability of agencies to respond to victims and their families appropriately through services and support that are sensitive and effective in meeting their needs, whilst simultaneously working to prevent domestic abuse from occurring, requires an integrated multi-disciplinary approach at both strategic and operational levels.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Children and Young People’s Plan 2010-2013
Joint Strategic Intelligence Assessment (2013-14)

RMBC Corporate Priorities:

- Ensuring care and protection are available for those people who need it most.
- Helping to create safe and healthy communities

11. Background Papers and Consultation

See Section 9 of the review report.

12. Contacts

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