

**RESPONSE TO SAFER AND STRONGER OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE'S REPORT ON DOMESTIC ABUSE**

To: **Cabinet**

Date: **10th July 2012**

From: **Head of Service: Youth Support Services**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Forward Plan ref: **N/a** *Key decision:* **No**

Purpose: **To respond to the report from the Safer and Stronger Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Domestic Abuse.**

Recommendation:

- a) To thank the Safer and Stronger Overview and Scrutiny Committee for its report.**
- b) To consider and agree the responses to the recommendations.**

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The County Council is a lead agency in the multi agency response to domestic abuse. The County hosts the Domestic Abuse Sexual Violence and Partnership Manager.
- 1.2 The Safer and Stronger Overview and Scrutiny Committee have undertaken a thorough evaluation of the service responses to domestic abuse by the partners who make up the Domestic Abuse Partnership. This response to the Scrutiny Committee on behalf of Cabinet is a County Council response to the issues raised.
- 1.3 The County is working with the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership on a new three year strategy and action plan which will be presented to Cabinet in the autumn.

2. RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS (THE ORIGINAL RECOMMENDATION BEING IN BOLD)

- 2.1 **The Domestic Abuse (DA) Partnership should adopt the new Home Office definition, when it is agreed**

Fully Accepted

Cabinet will expect that the DA partnership will adopt the new definition from the Home Office once agreed by central Government

- 2.2 **The Partnership should ensure that there is a common understanding and application of the definition across agencies**

Fully Accepted

Cabinet would expect all partners to be using the same working definition and with a common approach to its meaning and intent. This may require some developmental work and case examples to be used in training. It is assumed that the DA Partnership will take responsibility for this training material and the wider dissemination of the definition through partnership agencies.

- 2.3 **The Partnership should report back to the Safer and Stronger O&S Committee in 2013 regarding progress in adapting to the new definition.**

Fully Accepted

It makes sense for this to take place and a date should be set in agreement between the DA partnership and the Overview and Scrutiny Chairs once the definition has been agreed by the Home Office.

- 2.4 **Progress should be made in the development and roll out of Children's Programmes, as per the 2008/11 DA Strategy.**

Partially Accepted

Cabinet is aware that a new DA Strategy for the period 2012/15 is being written with a new set of actions to reflect the revised priorities. Cabinet would like to see any outstanding actions from the 2008/11 DA Strategy reviewed

and, if appropriate, rolled forward into the new 2012/15 DA Strategy. Cabinet is aware that the new DA Strategy will be signed off by both Cabinet and the Health and Well Being Board in the Autumn and that the DA Partnership Chair will be closely involved in the setting of the Strategy and Action plan.

2.5 The Chairman of the DA Partnership Implementation Group should periodically report on progress made in tackling DA.

Fully Accepted

Domestic Abuse reduction is a priority for the Council and so periodic reporting to Cabinet should be a part of the DA Strategy. It is for the Health and Well Being Board to decide upon the frequency of reporting. Cabinet would expect to see updates on DA within the normal performance reporting cycle.

2.6 The Safer and Stronger O&S Committee should review the effectiveness of the new Lead Officer arrangements approximately six months after commencement.

Partially Accepted.

Cabinet does not find that the Domestic Abuse Partnership Manager to be inappropriately placed within the management hierarchy given the support available to the post holder from the line manager of the post, Head of Service and Director. However it is acknowledged that the post holder previously reported directly to a Director post. Regular briefings with the Deputy Leader have now been arranged to ensure that the profile of DA is maintained and that strategic Member leadership can be supported by Officers. The Lead Officer is a Service Director and whilst Cabinet is happy to keep any senior leadership responsibilities under review there is no criteria for what effectiveness might look like. Cabinet would expect that the success of the actions within the emerging DA Strategy are the markers for judgments of effectiveness.

2.7 The DA Partnership should investigate the potential to develop joint commissioning arrangements to extract maximum value from limited resources and to establish a pooled budget to facilitate and provide a focus for joint working.

Partially Accepted

Cabinet expects all opportunities for integrated working to be explored and where a financial and business case can be clearly set out through the establishment of a joint budget. The term 'pooled budget' has a more technical set of requirements which may detract attention from the task in hand and a joint budget which partners contribute to will be as effective as a way of supporting joint working if possible.

2.8 That referral routes are established to enable people in Fenland to have access to IDVA support

Fully Accepted

Cabinet is aware of the problem of specialist NHS services attached to the acute hospitals which serve the County being based outside of the County borders. This is not unique to Fenland although it is acknowledged that this has a sizable potential effect. Cabinet expects that the DA partnership will work with the NHS to seek effective pathways to services within the NHS although cannot commit to further funding as a means of resolution.

2.9 Partners should develop common data standards and ensure that these are adopted, monitored and managed.

Partially Accepted.

Cabinet agrees that as far as possible data standards should strive to harmonise to record and report the same things. This is not always within the gift of the partners who have a range of standards imposed upon them from external sources. Partners will need to strike a balance between their own performance needs and accountabilities and the local use of data and effective performance monitoring without this becoming an additional burden.

2.10 The DA Partnership should investigate ways of collecting data about the overall success of interventions from the perspective of victims.

Fully Accepted

Cabinet supports the collection and use of victim data in support of improving service responses as well as incorporating victim perspectives into service planning

2.11 Localities should be encouraged to utilise the Freedom Programme and provided with resource to do this, allocated on the basis of greatest need.

Partially Accepted

Cabinet is supportive of Localities being encouraged to use group based interventions such as the Freedom Programme where need demonstrates that it should be made available but is not able to allocate additional dedicated funding and such decisions will need to be taken locally in the context of other pressures and demands.

2.12 Cabinet should preserve, or preferably expand, resources devoted to addressing DA wherever they are located across the Council

Partially Accepted

Cabinet understands that the DA budget has recently been increased with the appointment of new staff and an additional budget of £80k. Cabinet is not able to give a long term guarantee for the sustainability of any budget but the present budget allocation reflects the increased prioritisation of DA by Cabinet and by the Health and Well Being Board.

2.13 The Safer and Stronger O&S Committee should review the outcomes achieved by investment in DA Services approximately one year from implementation

Fully Accepted.

Cabinet would welcome such a review of outcomes

2.14 Cabinet should investigate the potential benefits of investing in DA related outreach work on an 'invest to save' basis.**Partially Accepted**

Cabinet is interested in how new ways of investing can save money being spent on acute and other expensive services. Should the DA Partnership wish to present such a case then Cabinet would be happy to look at it. Should further reforms of public services finances take place and give opportunities for the County and its partners to access savings made by timely investments in preventative services then the case may become even more compelling.

2.15 The DA Partnership Implementation Group should review current processes for addressing DA and sharing information on DA across Children's Services.**Partially Accepted**

The Public Service Board for Cambridgeshire has agreed an over arching policy to support information sharing. Cabinet would expect that the DA Partnership can make a significant contribution to the processes by which information is shared across Children's Services. Cabinet is concerned that the recommendation as set out is potentially a very wide one and the DA Partnership will need to be more specific in defining the actions before approaching Children's Services. The concept of 'intelligence sharing' is also to be encouraged.

2.16 DA training provision for frontline workers should be reviewed so that all workers are able to take appropriate actions when encountering DA issues, including referrals for specialist support**Fully Accepted**

Cabinet is content for a review to take place and recommendations made to the Children and Young People's Services Workforce Development Group. Cabinet also welcomes wider staff knowledge of referral routes to specialist support.

2.17 The Safer and Stronger O&S Committee should monitor the Council's social care thresholds in relation to DA incidents, compare against similar counties, and review the application of the Barnado's Domestic Violence Risk Assessment Model**Partially Accepted**

Cabinet understands that Children's Social Care is seeking to implement the Barnado's Domestic Violence Risk Assessment Model as a direct result of the work of the Safer and Stronger Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Cabinet is concerned that a significant review of social care thresholds will cut across work already in hand regarding the Social Care Unit Model, Common Assessment review, and the Model of Staged Intervention. Comparative work is already taking place through comparisons with other Counties in the Region and by Family Group for Social Care. The Children and Young People's

Overview and Scrutiny Committee is already monitoring the implementation of the Social Care Unit Model which includes examination of thresholds

2.18 Current and planned work within the MARU to process referrals and notifications should be reviewed in 6 months time by the Safer and Stronger O&S Committee.

Partially Accepted

Cabinet is content for this work to be reviewed however it is also being presented to the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and therefore this could be a duplication of effort. Cabinet suggests that the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee takes a lead on this work.

2.19 There should be stricter regulation of Level 3 incidents by appropriately trained staff. A review should be conducted to examine this issue.

Rejected

Cabinet is aware that the grading of incidents and the collation of information so that it can become useful intelligence for partner agencies is a complicated and difficult process. As resources are limited the MARU and IAT can only deal with cases which are more severe. The gathering and grading of information can lead to level 3 incidents being actioned but not routinely so. Cabinet finds this to be more of an issue of capacity than one of skill or competence. A review is not likely to be helpful at this point as there are no further resources to direct to level 3 incidents. .

2.20 The Council should work with schools to advocate awareness and learning about safe relationships and DA.

Accepted

Cabinet is happy to advocate for safe relationship awareness in schools although of course can neither compel nor require schools to do so. This work is may be commissioned via the traded Personal Social and Health Education Service or from elsewhere. Safe relationship awareness is also built into child protection training which is available for schools

2.21 Officers should consult the group regarding the findings from the Officer review about adult safeguarding resource allocation at the MARU.

Accepted

Cabinet would expect Officers to discuss the review of resource allocation at the MARU for adult safeguarding with the DA Partnership.

3. ALIGNMENT WITH PRIORITIES AND WAYS OF WORKING

3.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

There are no significant implications for this priority.

3.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives

There are significant implications for this priority. The harm caused by domestic abuse can be life limiting and wide ranging in effect. Therefore ensuring that effective action to recognise domestic abuse and to intervene appropriately is a key priority for the County and its' partners.

3.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

There are significant implications for this priority. Victims of domestic abuse are by their very nature vulnerable including children and young people upon whom the effects of domestic violence can be highly adverse. The County has a central role in the provision of services to mitigate the impact of domestic abuse on individuals and families.

3.4 Ways of working

There are significant implications for this priority. The development of effective responses to domestic abuse necessarily means that a partnership approach is likely to be the most appropriate means of supporting victims across a range of needs. For such an approach to work partners need clear structures for accountability, effective information exchange and trusting cooperation at both operational and strategic levels.

4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Resource and Performance Implications

The County has made DA a priority for funding as a key strategic priority and will expect the Domestic Abuse Partnership to manage performance effectively and to report back to Cabinet on a periodic basis

4.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

Failure to protect victims of DA can have potentially lifelong and life threatening risks. The mitigation of risks through effective partnership working and prioritisation are central to the prevention of domestic homicide.

4.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are communities who are known to be at risk of domestic violence but for whom accessing and then providing culturally appropriate services pose significant difficulties and challenges.

4.4 Engagement and Consultation

There are no significant implications expected.

Source Documents	Location
Overview and Scrutiny Report	Rob Jakeman