

Safeguarding Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Review

*Seeking to improve the lives of people, communities
and businesses in Dorset*

Domestic Abuse

***'Rate of children subject to Child Protection where
domestic abuse is a feature'***

Working Together for a Strong and Successful Dorset

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council is committed to a process of regular and objective assessment of its services and the contribution that it makes to improving outcomes for the residents and communities we serve.
- 1.2 This is achieved through a focused and structured assessment of those areas which have been identified as priorities in our Corporate Plan.
- 1.3 This ensures that the Executive (Cabinet) is held to account for the delivery of positive outcomes through an appropriate and proportionate process of independent scrutiny.
- 1.4 The scrutiny process is therefore welcomed as constructive mechanism through which the Council can seek to provide assurance, or identify areas where it is felt that improvements can be made.
- 1.5 Any identified areas for improvement will be captured and recommended to the Executive (Cabinet) for consideration and, where agreed, implemented.

2. SCRUTINY REVIEW- THE APPROACH

- 2.1 To support the Committee in a structured approach to scrutiny, a small number of 'Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE)' have been developed to provide a framework to the assessment process.
- 2.2 These KLOE's are based on the Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) principles and methodology. They are purposefully focused to ensure a clear rationale and scope is in place to support the review process.
- 2.3 These are not intended to restrict the Committee in its collection of evidence, nor to limit representations or attendance that members feel are necessary to give due consideration to a topic. They simply look to ensure that a consistent and constructive approach is taken to the scrutiny of topics.
- 2.4 The framework of KLOE's set out below are to help the Committee in their identification of those areas where it is considered that improvements could be achieved for the benefit of residents, communities and businesses in Dorset.

3. TOPIC SELECTED FOR SCRUTINY – Domestic Abuse

Corporate Plan Outcome Priority: - SAFE

- *Crime, antisocial behaviour and domestic abuse across Dorset is minimised*

Outcome Indicator

- Rate of children subject to a Child Protection where domestic abuse is a feature

(A simple trend line would be inserted here – if not available then Data Development Plan would be agreed. Alternatively a proxy indicator could be used in the interim e.g. rate of



children subject to a Child Protection Plan, crime rate and domestic abuse. As it will take some time to “Turn the Curve” it is helpful to have some proxy measures to indicate progress in the right direction or not).

4. KEY LINES OF ENQUIRY – A Structured Approach to Scrutiny

We need to actively look to ‘Turn the Curve’ – Using 7 “Killer” Questions

1. If we do nothing where is the trend heading, is this OK?

- From a recent audit completed by Children’s Services, 97% of children subject to a Child Protection Plan showed that domestic abuse was a concern.
- The evidence suggests locally and nationally that incidents of domestic abuse is rising and is impacting significantly on outcomes for children, young people and carers. If we do nothing then the trend is likely to continue locally and hence this situation is not OK.
- A study into Domestic Abuse (undertaken in 2009 by Professor Sylvia Walby) estimated that nationally the total cost to services in dealing with the impacts of domestic abuse were £4.57 Billion. In Dorset alone this was estimated as an overall cost to agencies involved as being in the region of £35 Million.

2. What’s helping and hindering the trend (“causes and forces”)?

- Domestic abuse is clearly associated with parental substance misuse and mental health problems (known collectively as the “toxic trio”)
- Hostility, intimidation and violence within families are significantly associated with poor attachments and poor outcomes resulting in children not reaching their potential. We know from Serious Case Reviews that domestic abuse is linked to serious harm and death of children and female carers.
- Evidence has also confirmed that perpetrators of domestic abuse are predominantly male.
- Victims of domestic abuse can be children and also both female and male carers (around 20%). It affects whole families and communities.
- Early Help and prevention work can reduce the risk of domestic abuse e.g. Dorset Families Matter.
- There is a lack of local provision for both victims and perpetrators.

3. Are local services and partnership working making a difference and providing value for money?

- Data suggests we have a significant journey to travel to make more of a difference in providing effective and efficient services.

- Evidence on specific services is patchy and requires further interrogation re. provision for victims and perpetrators, specialist programmes and impact of early help and prevention.
- There is a need for more of a whole family and community approach with partners (cross council, multi-disciplinary and closer working/integration of services). No one service can solve the problem alone!
- Local people need to be better communicated with on the scale of the problem, impact on lives and how they could be part of the solution.

4. What additional information / research do we need to properly understand the “causes and forces”?

- *See above*
- Need to task relevant officers and partnerships to complete an analysis to ensure we are able to properly understand the ‘causes and forces’ at work around domestic abuse.
- Need to learn from existing national research and other Councils e.g. Hertfordshire who have done a significant amount of work in this area
- There is a need to better understand the costs of late intervention and domestic abuse.

5. Who are the key partners we need to be working with (including local residents)?

- Dorset Safeguarding Children’s Board.
 - *One of the key priorities or “obsessions” for the Board is to significantly reduce rising numbers of children subject to a Child Protection Plan*
- Adult Safeguarding Board
- Health and Wellbeing Board
- Community Safety Partnership
- Dorset Families Matters
- Dorset CC Research and Information
- Women’s Refuge
- Domestic Abuse Forum
- Police and Crime Commissioner / Dorset Police

6. What could work to turn the trend in the right direction including “low cost and no cost solutions”? Additional information/research around “what works”?

- Multi-disciplinary and co-location of services / teams.
- Strengthening families and communities around domestic abuse prevention.



- Frontline services better understanding risks and impact of domestic abuse (joint training).
- Learn from examples of best practice e.g. Family Assessment Support Service (FASS) programme in Newport, South Wales and Department for Education Innovation Programme evaluation, adult perpetrator programmes etc.

7. What is the Council's and Members role and specific contribution?

- Up to 4 key (SMART) actions that could be worked on from tomorrow:

1. Commission further work on properly understanding the local 'causes and forces' at work around domestic abuse, costs and its impact on people lives.
(Lead person to be identified)
2. Identify local opportunities to build on encouraging practice - linked to "what works" and learning from other places.
(Lead person to be identified)
3. Start discussion with Dorset Safeguarding Children's Board on joint working opportunities around domestic abuse.
(Lead person to be identified)
4. Start a Dorset wide public education campaign on the extent of Domestic Abuse, its impact and encouraging a call to action to 'turn the curve'.
(Lead person to be identified)

OTHER SUPPORTING INFORMATION

In supporting the scrutiny review the Committee could also be provided with some specific data to provide some additional background and context as follows;

- i) Financial information**
(3-year budget & expenditure profile etc.)
- ii) Performance information**
(Related outcome statement(s); Population Indicators and Performance Measures)
- iii) Risk information**
(Relevant risks and their respective rankings on the Corporate Risk Register)

Dorset County Council
June 2016