

Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Dorset County Council



Date of Meeting	19 January 2017
Officer	Helen Coombes - Director for Adult and Community Services
Subject of Report	Domestic Abuse - Key Areas of Challenge
Executive Summary	<p>In October 2016 a Domestic Abuse Scoping Paper, was reviewed by this Committee. It provided background information on domestic abuse in Dorset and it set out local governance arrangements, service responses and some evidence of what works.</p> <p>This paper looks further at the key areas of challenge for Children's and Adult Services and invites members to scrutinise how the County Council collaborates at a local level. It sets out proposed joint plans with key partners, and what further actions may be required moving forward.</p> <p>The Government definition of domestic violence and abuse is:</p> <p>'Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or who have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass but is not limited to a wide range of abuse including: psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional. It includes so call 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, by including these elements this definition makes it clear, that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group'.</p> <p>The impact of domestic violence and abuse is far-reaching. For children it can result in poor long term emotional and mental health and for communities can carry significant economic cost.</p> <p>Currently an estimated 2.1 million people in the UK suffer some form of domestic abuse each year - around 1.4 million women (8.5% of the population) and 700,000 men (4.5% of the population).</p>

	<p>Domestic abuse victims and their children are among the most vulnerable in society; domestic abuse accounts for 10% of all recorded crimes. Each year, more than a 100,000 British adults are at high and imminent risk of being murdered or seriously injured as a result of domestic abuse. Over 130,000 children live in these homes.</p> <p>On 8 March 2016 the government produced a four year strategy '<i>Ending violence Against Women and Girls</i>', which sets out the wide range of actions which underpin a National Statement of Expectations as well as a blueprint for local action. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Dorset is currently 19th highest out of 42 police forces nationally for domestic abuse crimes.</p> <p>In response to this Dorset County Council staff along with partner agencies are seeking to develop an integrated whole family approach to addressing and stopping violence and abuse through the introduction of a Pan Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy and action plan. This is an ambitious plan to reduce the harm caused by domestic abuse, increase the safety of those experiencing the abuse and provide appropriate intervention to reduce reoffending.</p>
<p>Impact Assessment:</p>	<p>Equalities Impact Assessment: N/A</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each year around 2.1m people suffer some form of domestic abuse - 1.4 million women (8.5% of the population) and 700,000 men (4.5% of the population) - Source ONS (2015), Crime Survey England and Wales 2013-14. London: Office for National Statistics. • Each year more than 100,000 people in the UK are at high and imminent risk of being murdered or seriously injured as a result of domestic abuse – Source Safe Lives (2015), getting it right first time: policy report. Bristol: Safe Lives. • Women are much more likely than men to be the victims of high risk or severe domestic abuse: 95% of those going to Marac or accessing an Idva service are women – Source Safe Lives (2015), Insights Idva National Dataset 2013-14. Bristol: Safe Lives. • In 2013-14 the police recorded 887,000 domestic abuse incidents in England and Wales – Source ONS (2015), Crime Survey England and Wales 2013-14. London: Office for National Statistics.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seven women a month are killed by a current or former partner in England and Wales - <i>ONS (2015), Crime Survey England and Wales 2013-14. London: Office for National Statistics.</i> • 130,000 children live in homes where there is high-risk domestic abuse – <i>Source Safe Lives (2015), getting it right first time: policy report. Bristol: Safe Lives.</i> • 62% of children living with domestic abuse are directly harmed by the perpetrator of the abuse, in addition to the harm caused by witnessing the abuse of others – <i>Source Caada (2014), In Plain Sight: Effective help for children exposed to domestic abuse. Bristol: Caada.</i> • On average high-risk victims live with domestic abuse for 2.3 years before getting help - <i>Source Safe Lives (2015), Insights Idva National Dataset 2013-14. Bristol: Safe Lives.</i> • 85% of victims sought help five times on average from professionals in the year before they got effective help to stop the abuse - <i>Source Safe Lives (2015), Insights Idva National Dataset 2013-14. Bristol: Safe Lives.</i>
	<p>Budget: N/A</p>
	<p>Risk Assessment:</p> <p>Having considered the risks associated with this decision using the County Council’s approved risk management methodology, the level of risk has been identified as:</p> <p>Current Risk: Medium Residual Risk : Medium</p>
	<p>Other Implications:</p> <p>Community Safety Partnerships, Safeguarding Adults and Children’s Boards to be regularly consulted and appraised of the work undertaken by the strategic leads group</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>The Safeguarding and Overview Scrutiny Committee receive updates on the progress of the Pan Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategic group action plan.</p>
<p>Reason for Recommendation</p>	<p>To monitor and comment on the work of Adult and Children’s Services and their partner agencies to be satisfied that they are working together effectively to improve the safety of adults and</p>

	children and to prevent and reduce incidents of violence and domestic abuse.
Appendices	Domestic Abuse Scoping Paper 5 October 2016
Background Papers	Pan Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy 2017 -2020
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1.0 Prevalence and local context

- 1.1 Historically the data in relation to domestic abuse is unreliable this is in part due to under-reporting as well as a failure to recognise when an incident may be classified as abuse. A distinguishing factor of domestic abuse is that victims are more likely to experience repeat incidents unlike other victims of crimes, which may also be a factor in under reporting.
- 1.2 Recent research has also evidenced that for victims over the age of sixty domestic abuse is often not recognised. The prevailing view is that it affects younger women or women with young children. Many surveys such as the Crime Survey for England and Wales have excluded consideration for older victims and awareness campaigns also tend to focus on younger victims.
- 1.3 This reinforces an assumption that abuse ceases to exist beyond a certain age an assumption, which may encourage professionals to link injuries, confusion or depression to an age related concerns rather than domestic abuse.
- 1.4 Figures held by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) show that between April 2013 and March 2016, 24,200 people aged between 16 and 59 in Dorset were a victim of domestic abuse. This includes 15,200 women and 8,900 men. Almost 7 percent (6.8%) were the victim of domestic abuse at least once. More than 8 percent were women (8.3%) and 5.2 percent were men. In the year ending March 2016 there was 11,109 domestic abuse related incidents and offences recorded in Dorset.
- 1.5 In the scoping paper presented to Committee by Children's Services in October, other relevant indicators demonstrated that on average 61 percent of all incidents of domestic abuse have children present and 97 percent of all child protection plans have domestic abuse as a feature. In Dorset the number and rate of children subject to Child protection plans has increased significantly over the last three years and is higher than the national rate and that of our statistical neighbours.
- 1.6 Whilst a comprehensive data set has been collected over the last five years by the Community Safety Partnerships and provides an analytical framework for determining need and predicting demand, there is an absence of qualitative data to enable an understanding of the impact that actions and services have on outcomes such as education, health and employment. Statistical data indicates that there is a rise in the number of domestic incidents between 16-19 year olds and further work is required to understand the reasons for this. Similarly little is known about the prevalence of domestic abuse amongst older people and other vulnerable adults.
- 1.7 The safety of the victim and the safety of their children are inextricably linked and in order to safeguard both, agencies need a whole picture approach. The aim of the Pan Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy therefore is to bring together statutory and voluntary partners to ensure a co-ordinated response through an agreed action plan and through continued partnership working.

2.0 The Local Authority

- 2.1 Whilst incidents of domestic abuse remain high, better rates of reporting as well as a co-ordinated response from police, social care, health and non-statutory services have helped to reduce rates of domestic abuse and increase an uptake of services. However more needs to be done to improve the mechanisms for identifying adults and children affected. One example of this would be through training frontline staff

across a range of service areas so they can better identify, where there may be domestic abuse and be more responsive.

- 2.2 Local authorities do not have a statutory duty to tackle domestic violence but under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, local authorities have a statutory responsibility to work with other agencies to reduce crime and disorder in their local area. As domestic abuse accounts for a significant proportion of violent crime in Dorset it is included within the crime reduction strategy, delivery plan and joint strategic needs assessment, which feeds into statutory partnerships.
- 2.3 However domestic abuse cannot be tackled by agencies working in isolation. All agencies need to be involved in appropriate roles and structures to reflect both their contribution and their needs. In Dorset there is a newly established strategic group for developing strategy and an action plan as well as an operational group for management and monitoring of services and outcomes.

3.0 Partnership working and complexity of abuse

- 3.1 Domestic abuse is a key priority for the three Community Safety Partnerships in Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole. In 2016, the Pan-Dorset Community Safety and Criminal Justice Board was established, which brings together elected members and strategic leads from each of those three partnerships, as well as Independent Chairs from the Safeguarding Adults and Children's Boards and representation from the local Criminal Justice Board. Domestic abuse has become a key thematic area of this Board and it is they who currently have oversight and responsibility for the implementation of the strategic action plan.
- 3.2 Against a backdrop of reducing budgets and structural change there remains a commitment to reducing the harm caused by domestic abuse across partner organisations. Each Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) is required to bring key agencies such as police, probation, youth justice, health, education and social care together to make sure local safeguarding is effective.
- 3.3 A key priority for all boards and local authorities has been in the area of child sexual exploitation, which may feature, domestic violence, sexual violence and street gang related sexual violence. Given the complexities in this area, young people may need support from a wide range of local agencies and one of the challenges for the strategic domestic and sexual violence groups is to ensure joined up working and appropriate information sharing.
- 3.4 With the introduction of the Care Act 2014, Safeguarding Adults Boards have now been placed on a statutory footing and as with LSCB's have a duty to bring partner organisations together to safeguard adults at risk. The Care Act guidance specifies that freedom from abuse and neglect is a key aspect of a person's well-being and local authorities should not be constrained in their view of what constitutes abuse or neglect. Domestic abuse is a category of abuse which was added following consultation on the draft Care Act Guidance although the experiences of younger and older people are likely to be significantly different and as such require a tailored response.
- 3.5 Research from *Safer Lives* shows that older victims of domestic abuse are far more likely to have suffered prolonged abuse, are less likely to leave, have an increased fear of change, and are more likely to suffer from health problems which can exacerbate their vulnerability to harm. When trying to access help and support this can be further compounded, as older persons are twice as likely to be living with the

perpetrator of their abuse (Safer Lives National Insights dataset 15-16). It has also been noted in their research that older women are far less likely to identify their situations as abusive which acts as a barrier and a challenge to workers who may try to offer support.

- 3.6 In a conurbation such as Dorset with an increasingly aging population this may pose particular challenges in the area of adult family abuse and service provision. For example there have been a few cases where family members have neglected an adults care needs to avoid costly care packages or for older victims to avoid disclosing abuse for fear of losing a relationship with a child or partner. What is clear is that domestic abuse can feature in a wide range of settings some of which, are hidden, many of which are complex.
- 3.7 The rural nature of Dorset provides further challenges to reaching victims of domestic abuse due to both dispersed populations and a lack of confidential community space. Victims can be isolated not just by location, but also by relationship status and different ethnic backgrounds.
- 3.8 Dorset County Council, in partnership with District Councils, currently commissions You First part of The You Trust to deliver a county-wide Integrated Domestic Abuse service. This includes refuge provision (which is available to people outside of the local area) as well as outreach. Early intervention is at the heart of this provision, playing a key role as a preventative measure to avoid escalation of abuse and prevent serious harm. The budget for this contract is £385,000.
- 3.9 The You First end of year report for 2015/16 highlighted a number of key headlines from their research relating to older persons aged 65 and over.
- 3.10 In Dorset, 28 percent of the population are over 65 yet of the 919 referrals received by the service during that year only 29 (approximately 3%) were for persons in that age bracket.
- 3.11 The proportion of people aged over 65 varies across the county. For example: in East Dorset, only 0.5 per cent of referrals were for older people, yet 31 per cent of the population is over 65. This highlights that referrals to You First are not representative of the demographics across Dorset.
- 3.12 You First also reports that for those referred who are over 65 their abuser is more likely to be their current partner or family member, within other age ranges their abuser is more likely to be an ex-partner, increasing risk further.
- 3.13 Correlating to this is safeguarding data which indicates that older women who live in their own homes are at highest risk of neglect and abuse.
- 3.14 You First also expressed concerns about the potential lack of response to older adults who may be experiencing domestic abuse at the hands of carers and the ability of agencies to respond to this.
- 3.15 In response to this Dorset County Council has entered a bid to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for a grant to enable the Council to lead on a project to create an 'Isolated community Engagement Programme'. Through the programme staff trained in domestic abuse will be able to provide support to vulnerable groups that do not usually present to domestic abuse services. This will include: Older people, minority groups, rural populations and other isolated groups that may be highlighted during the development of the work.

- 3.16 The bid is still in the early stages and the outcome will not be known until further into the New Year.

4.0 Domestic Homicides

- 4.1 Poor responses to domestic abuse is not an option as the costs associated with failing to protect vulnerable adults and children continue to mount. Between 2011 and 2016 there have been twelve Domestic Homicides across the Pan Dorset area. Six in Bournemouth, five in Dorset and one in Poole. A Domestic Homicide is one in which:

'the death of a person over 16 has or appears to have resulted in violence, abuse or neglect either by a person he/she was related to or had been in an intimate personal relationship with or a member of the same household'.

- 4.2 The Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR) held have challenged the stereotypical notion that domestic abuse is perpetrated by a male partner against a female partner. From the homicides that have occurred, seven were female victims and five were male victims. Three involved children murdering their parents and one involved a parent murdering their child.
- 4.3 The Pan Dorset Domestic Abuse strategy and action plan will incorporate learning from the completed DHR's and these will be monitored through local Community Safety Partnerships. Both the Safeguarding Children's and Adults Boards will be responsible for ensuring lessons learnt will be disseminated across their own and partner organisations.
- 4.4 Much has been achieved through partnership working and there continues to be a strong emphasis on improving prevention and response across agencies. However data shows that we have a long way to go to address failings in how we respond to domestic violence and Dorset County Council can take the lead in making sure their area is amongst the best at supporting vulnerable adults and children.

5.0 Key Challenges remaining

- i. Mental health issues and substance misuse are a common feature amongst perpetrators, improved information sharing amongst professionals, including G.P, hospitals, and substance misuse services in order to promote holistic responses and shared pathways is needed
- ii. Understanding more about the victims journey and their perception of risk particularly their perception of danger is crucial
- iii. Providing support to children living within households where domestic abuse is present remains an ongoing challenge
- iv. Understanding the prevalence of domestic abuse amongst older people and vulnerable adults
- v. Meeting the needs of parents who are victims of domestic abuse from their children
- vi. Effective interventions for young people who are abusing their parents and partners

- vii. Reducing reoffending through effective perpetrator programmes
 - viii. Strengthening links across partnerships and Boards
 - ix. Sustaining existing victims services
 - x. Delivery of domestic abuse awareness training/healthy relationship programmes within schools
 - xi. Providing training to all front line staff
 - xii. Ensuring Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) are effective in protecting victims and reducing the risk of further harm
- 5.1 The above are included in the Pan Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy and the action plan will be targeted at achieving these it is recommended that members receive regular updates on the progress of the plan and on the work of the Safeguarding Adults and Children's Boards in response to the issue of domestic abuse.
- 5.2 Finally it is important to breakdown boundaries and promote collaborative working across adult and children's services. Where there are concerns that an adult is experiencing domestic abuse then there should be a concurrent exploration of whether there are any child safeguarding concerns and vice versa. The introduction of the Children's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub proactively identifies and supports victims and their families which is a significant step forward in addressing many of the concerns, however there may still be some gaps for vulnerable adults and for those parents who are experiencing child to parent violence.
- 5.3 The Council's own communication teams can continue to help raise public awareness around the dynamics of domestic abuse and specialist support services by linking in with local and national campaigns which challenge widely held myths around domestic abuse. These campaigns should also be tailored to minority groups who may face multiple barriers when accessing services or seeking support. There should also be a full understanding of the emerging issues of so called honour based abuse, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

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