

Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Dorset County Council



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| Date of Meeting | 30 January 2018 |
| Officer | Helen Coombes – Transformation Lead for Adult and Community Services Forward Together Programme |
| Subject of Report | Domestic Abuse – Inquiry Day |
| Executive Summary | <p>On 17 October 2017, The Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee held an Inquiry Day into Domestic Abuse in Dorset. The objectives of the day were to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gain insight into the experience of those who use services• Hear views and receive feedback from providers and other stakeholders• Hear from workers on the front line• Understand how partners are working together to tackle domestic abuse• Look at the overall strategy for addressing domestic abuse in Dorset• Identify how members can contribute to the quality of support provided to those experiencing domestic abuse across Dorset <p>Members heard that domestic abuse is persistent and widespread it is a recurrent issue across agency and is the most common factor in situations where children are at risk of serious harm in this country (Child in Need statistics 16-17). In Dorset, as with other areas there has been some success in responding to the volume of cases presented and the next step is to take a long-term approach towards prevention and reduction.</p> <p>However, this is not an individual agency task but one which requires a societal change and a public service message aimed at behaviours and attitudes of</p> |

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| | <p>perpetrators. Evidence on intervention programmes tend to show limited progress, new models therefore need to be developed and more needs to be done to provide an evidence base that is rigorous enough to justify investment. One parallel area of work is Child Sexual Exploitation where significant work has been undertaken around perpetrators and disruption in behaviours; what this inquiry day has shown is that whilst there are pockets of good practice further progress is needed to deliver the change that is required.</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. • Seven women a month are killed by a current or former partner in England and Wales - ONS (2015), Crime Survey England and Wales 2013-14. London: Office for National Statistics. • 130,000 children live in homes where there is high-risk domestic abuse – Source Safe Lives (2015), getting it right first time: policy report. Bristol: Safe Lives. • 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 – Source |

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| | <p>Caada (2014), <i>In Plain Sight: Effective help for children exposed to domestic abuse. Bristol: Caada.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On average high-risk victims live with domestic abuse for 2.3 years before getting help - Source Safe Lives (2015), Insights Idva National Dataset 2013-14. Bristol: Safe Lives. • 85% of victims sought help five times on average from professionals in the year before they got effective help to stop the abuse - Source Safe Lives (2015), Insights Idva National Dataset 2013-14. Bristol: Safe Lives. <p>Budget: N/A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk Assessment: • 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 Current Risk: MEDIUM • Residual Risk: MEDIUM <p>Other Implications: N/A</p> |
| <p>Recommendation</p> | <p>The Safeguarding and Overview Scrutiny Committee receive updates on the progress of the Whole Family approach to tackling domestic abuse and 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, including the Community Safety Partnership to be satisfied that they are working together effectively to improve the safety of adults and children and to prevent and reduce incidents of violence and domestic abuse.</p> |
| <p>Appendix 1 Appendix 2 Appendix 3</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day Programme • List of those giving evidence • Current work underway |
| <p>Background Papers</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic Abuse-Key areas of challenge report to scrutiny 19 January 2017. • Pan Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy 2017 -2020 |

1. Approach

The committee adopted the Inquiry day model, with question and answer sessions divided into four areas with a final session on future priorities:

- Direct Experience
- Practice
- How we work with others
- Commissioning, provision, quality, services and best practice
- Future priorities

A list of those organisations who attended can be found in Appendix 1. In addition to elected members on panel and those invited to give evidence, colleagues from across agency, cabinet and elected members were also invited to join the audience. Each evidence session included questions and comment from the audience which broadened the debate and enhanced the quality of the information shared.

2. Evidence Session 1

In the first evidence session members heard from an invited guest who had experienced domestic abuse and practitioners from You First and Waves. Questions were asked about police response, resources, community and professional support from G. P's, other health care providers and social services

2.1 Key themes in Evidence Session 1:

- Reluctance to report by those at risk
- Mixed police and other statutory body responses
- Effect on families
- Control and Coercion and lack of insight by professionals
- Warm bath analogy (warm bath cold dripping tap)
- Financial limits on voluntary agencies who provide key lines of support
- Training and staff skills in tackling domestic abuse issues
- Lack of funding for training
- Experience of statutory agencies and differing approaches to this complex area
- Domestic abuse is often hidden
- Emphasis on the victim to provide protection to children

2.2 Future Areas of focus:

- Training for staff across all agencies on better understanding domestic abuse and issues of coercion and control for a confident and upskilled workforce
- Long term funding.
- Reliance cannot be placed on voluntary agencies to fill the gaps
- Better information sharing, earlier responses to risk by agencies and better flags
- Holistic approach to domestic abuse
- Request that elected members raise the profile of domestic abuse
- Long term strategy required to reduce prevalence

3. Evidence Session 2

Representatives from the police, health, children's and adult services and probation described how they sought to prioritise and respond to incidents of domestic abuse, resources available to them and practice challenges

3.1 Key themes in Evidence Session 2:

- Dependent on willingness of victims to share information
- Dependent on levels of engagement from victims and perpetrators
- Restricted to signposting only
- Some agencies only resourced for high-risk cases
- Reduced opportunity for prevention and early intervention
- Information sharing across agencies sometimes limited
- Agencies, not always aware that DA present
- Limited pathways or programmes when perpetrators not deemed to present high-risk
- Engagement of perpetrators on voluntary basis means dropout rates can be high
- Drugs, alcohol and poor mental health can be a feature and this also needs to be addressed, assessments need to be properly targeted
- Low investment in perpetrator programmes
- Post code lottery around funding exacerbates this
- Absence of a strategic approach makes it harder to see connections between incidents
- MARAC excludes older people and thresholds are exclude some victims
- Coercion and Control laws not yet fully embedded or understood
- Information not routinely shared with Dorset schools unlike Bournemouth and Poole
- Domestic abuse amongst the elderly and those with learning disability is not addressed or understood

3.2 Future Areas of Focus:

- Greater clarity needed around the complexities of information sharing
- Better training around coercion and control
- Long term prevention strategy led nationally
- Perpetrator programmes that target low risk as well as high
- Improved public message from members
- Collective offer across agencies to provide practical, emotional and psychological support to vulnerable adults and children

4. Evidence Session 3

Strategic leads from the statutory agencies, business managers from the Adults and Children's safeguarding Boards and the Chair of the Community Safety Partnership responded to members questions about the key issues raised in earlier sessions.

4.1 Key Areas in Evidence Session 3:

- Recognition that agencies must take collective responsibility/approach to domestic abuse
- A whole family approach is required including victim and perpetrator
- Confusion around available pathways staff not always aware of what resources are available
- Professional curiosity needs to be encouraged and strengthened amongst all staff
- Noted that 92% of all G.P surgeries in Dorset have domestic abuse leads
- Ongoing issues around information sharing consent and capacity
- More training needed for staff across all agencies
- Increased effectiveness of MARAC and review of thresholds needed.
- Children's and adult's services should unite to form one service, community Safety Partnerships could be an ideal vehicle for this

- Insufficient links between organisations and stakeholders
- Needs to be increased investment early on to save money and resource in the long term
- Domestic abuse not always seen within the context of other presenting issues
- Some adult focused agencies did not always consider risks to children and vice versa

4.2 Future Areas of Focus:

- Strengthen Family partnership zones to enable information to be shared that will support all family members
- Better signposting across DCC particularly areas of responsibility and focus for Boards
- Greater clarity around information sharing, proportionate to levels of risk
- Development of an Adult safeguarding MASH or similar be developed to enable early identification and help to vulnerable adults
- Strategies to identify and support hidden victim's-work is underway with police and G. P's around this
- Older people vulnerabilities for example those with dementia-risks from family and carers who may be one and the same
- Teenage abuse and referral to agencies
- Strategies within the acute sector to identify victim and perpetrator need to be strengthened

5. Evidence Session 4:

Commissioners and providers were asked by members what they thought would have the biggest impact on safeguarding vulnerable children and adults and what is currently commissioned to tackle domestic abuse as well as the outcomes from programmes and initiatives

5.1 Key Areas in Evidence Session 4:

- Dorset County Council and You Trust have had success with their isolated communities programme
- Challenge is sustaining funding, volunteers continue to be trained as part of the resilience programme
- Information sharing once again was an issue for agencies and partners
- Unequal treatment between voluntary and statutory agencies-not same levels of respect or recognition
- Commissioning can empower agencies important to work together and utilise the expertise
- Current whole family approach adopted by CMHT appears to be working well
- Information around performance was shared and outcomes from programmes
- Work underway with acute trusts and GP surgeries-separate facilities available to support confidentiality

5.2 Areas of Future Focus:

- Consideration be given to co-location of agencies voluntary and statutory for isolated communities 'one stop shop' Purbeck locality hub is being developed
- Supporting third sector when grant funding ends

- Commissioning and delivery should be joined as cuts in statutory sector impact on voluntary and vice versa
- Learning from DHR's needs to be visible and effective
- Multi agency Pan Dorset Directory should be produced and regularly updated including:
 - What is our offer
 - Who is it aimed at
 - Who can access support and services

6. Conclusion.

The key themes that emerged from the day were:

- The importance of data sharing in a timely and proportionate way. There needs to be a more consistent understanding of what information can be shared, with whom and when it should be shared. There then need to be systems in place to facilitate that.
- Making every contact count-training in awareness across all staff to ensure confidence to identify abuse and respond to issues.
- Corporate parenting role for the council-what can the council do to be aware and protect against manipulation of partners through children?
- A move towards co-location of services such as housing and legal advice, Independent Domestic Abuse Advisors, Children and Adult social care and Third sector providers-a 'one stop shop'
- Better sign-posting of services
- Need for empowerment and better funding for voluntary agencies. The volume of domestic abuse incidents is so great that it requires well designed systems and systems and processes to manage the load. Short term crisis management can make it difficult to see the bigger picture, including elements of coercion and control.
- A good understanding of risk-the focus on immediate crisis leads agencies to consider those people and children at immediate, visible risk. As a result, agencies are not always looking at the right things or focusing sufficiently on the perpetrator of the abuse
- Effective support for those who experience domestic abuse. There is not always sufficient focus on the perpetrator. The focus is often on removing the family leaving the perpetrator to move on to another family and potentially, a repeated pattern of abuse
- Whole family approach-some interventions focus purely on the adult or the child. Domestic abuse can involve multiple forms of abuse that need to be linked together to fully understand the extent of the impact.
- Critically a better focus on prevention as intervention can often be too late. Domestic abuse often starts small yet there is insufficient focus in this area.

Domestic Abuse – Inquiry Day 2017

Members are requested to consider and reflect upon the priority issues and messages that were identified throughout the Inquiry Day including any which, may have not been fully captured, and identify a set of recommendations and actions for Cabinet to consider. Requesting their support to commit to further targeted activity, with key partners to tackle domestic abuse and improve outcomes for vulnerable adults and children.

Helen Coombes
January 2018