

People & Health Scrutiny Committee

28 January 2020

Community Safety Annual Report

Choose an item.

Portfolio Holder: Cllr G Carr-Jones, Housing and Community Safety

Local Councillor(s):

Executive Director: V Broadhurst, Interim Executive Director of People - Adults

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Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

That members of the Committee consider and comment on the community safety annual report.

Reason for Recommendation:

To ensure the Council complies with its legal duties relating to community safety.

1. Executive Summary

Under the Police & Justice Act 2006, local authorities are required to have Crime & Disorder Committees that review and scrutinise partners' community safety work. The committees should formally review progress at least once a year.

In Dorset Council, the function of the Crime & Disorder Committee is fulfilled by the People & Health Scrutiny Committee (for scrutiny work) and the People & Health Overview Committee (for any proactive community safety work).

This annual scrutiny report provides information on partners' work in three main areas:

- Progress against the Community Safety Plan 2020-23
- Work undertaken to tackle domestic abuse, including partners' response during the Covid 19 pandemic
- The response to issues emerging from Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) that are relevant to Dorset Council

Any observations or recommendations from the Committee will be considered by the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and used to help develop its work, including refreshing the Community Safety Plan for 2021/22.

2. Financial Implications

The Dorset CSP does not receive any funding, however partners' plans and strategies clarify where they will focus their time and effort and their broad activity to meet priorities.

A funding agreement is in place with partners to meet the costs of conducting DHRs.

3. Well-being and Health Implications

Tackling crime and the fear of crime has a significant impact on health and wellbeing.

4. Climate implications

None

5. Other Implications

Community safety – as set out in the report.

6. Risk Assessment

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: LOW

Residual Risk: LOW

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

An Equalities Impact Assessment was completed when developing partners' most recent community safety plan. The assessment highlighted several positive impacts on those with a protected characteristic.

Further impact assessments will be completed when reviewing the plan.

8. Appendices

None.

9. Background Papers

Dorset Community Safety Partnership Terms of Reference - [CLICK HERE](#)

Dorset Community Safety Plan 2020-23 -[CLICK HERE](#)

Dorset Domestic Homicide Reviews - [CLICK HERE](#)

10. Background

10.1 Local authorities are required to have Crime & Disorder Committees that scrutinise the Council's and its partners' delivery of their statutory community safety functions. The committees should formally review progress at least once a year.

10.2 Partners' work is co-ordinated through the Dorset Community Safety Partnership (CSP). The CSP is a statutory partnership under The Crime & Disorder Act 1998. It brings together the following responsible authorities who must work together to understand and address community safety issues in their area:

- Dorset Council
- Dorset Police
- Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group
- Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Authority
- National Probation Service (Dorset)
- Dorset, Devon and Cornwall Probation

10.3 The terms of reference for the Dorset CSP describe its role, working practices and the duties the partnership is required to carry out. They include:

- Producing an annual Partnership Strategic Assessment (PSA) that pulls together information, provides an analysis of community safety issues and sets out the matters that partners should prioritise.
- Developing and implementing a three-year community safety plan that is updated annually.
- Engaging and consulting with communities about community safety issues in the area.
- Having in place a protocol to allow partners to share relevant information to tackle issues.
- Developing and implementing a Reducing Reoffending Strategy for the area.
- Conducting Domestic Homicide Reviews.

10.4 This annual scrutiny report focuses on three main areas of activity:

- Progress against the Community Safety Plan 2020-23
- Work undertaken to tackle domestic abuse, including partners' response during the Covid 19 pandemic
- The response to issues emerging from Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) that are relevant to Dorset Council

11. Progress Against the Community Safety Plan 2020-2023

Community Safety Plans

- 11.1 CSP's are required to produce three-year Community Safety Plans that are revised annually.
- 11.2 The plans should be informed by partners' most recent PSA and local people's views about community safety issues.
- 11.3 The Dorset CSP agreed its 2020-23 Community Safety Plan in March 2020. It was formally adopted by Dorset Council in October 2020. The Plan includes the following priorities:
- Domestic Abuse
 - Serious Sexual Offences
 - Rural Crime
 - Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking
 - County Lines
 - Fraud

- Public Place Violence
- Anti-Social Behaviour

11.4 Partners also monitor hate crime including in the wider context of community cohesion.

11.5 Reducing re-offending is a cross cutting area of work for partners and they have a separate strategy to address this issue. There is also a separate Alcohol & Drugs Strategy, led by Public Health, that covers the pan-Dorset area.

Progress Against the Community Safety Plan

11.6 The first year of the 2020-23 Plan has been dominated by the need to respond to and prioritise issues associated with the Covid 19 pandemic.

11.7 Partnership work on community safety has continued throughout the pandemic though it has been influenced by the effect of Covid measures (e.g. people staying at home). One of the main areas of focus for the CSP during this time has been domestic abuse.

11.8 Examples of work undertaken so far in 2020/21 include:

- Revising our approach to tackling Modern Slavery to take account of new government guidance and expectations
- Having lead professionals for Modern Slavery in place within Adults and Children's Services. The lead professionals act as a point of advice and information for staff and help ensure links are made to safeguarding services.
- Awareness raising around fraud to help people spot issues and know where to go for help and advice
- Running several successful initiatives to tackle issues associated with anti-social behaviour, including use of Anti-Social Behaviour Contracts, Anti-Social Behaviour Injunctions, Community Protection Warnings and Notices and Criminal Behaviour Orders
- Setting up a detached youth outreach project in the East Dorset area at the beginning of the first lockdown which engaged some of our most vulnerable young people and helped reduce issues of anti-social behaviour in the area
- The 100 Days of Summer Campaign which ran in the Weymouth area and saw Neighbourhood Policing Teams and Council officers using dedicated foot patrols to help address anti-social behaviour issues

- Supporting the '16 Days of Action' campaign on domestic abuse including highlighting the support available to Council staff and managers and services available in communities. This work was supported by Cllr Molly Rennie, the Council's Member Champion for Domestic Abuse.
- Revising partners' approach to managing high risk cases of domestic abuse moving from monthly Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) meetings to shorter, more focused meetings that take place four days a week
- Government funding has been secured to launch a new domestic abuse perpetrator programme in Dorset. The DRIVE project works with high-harm, high-risk and serial perpetrators of domestic abuse to prevent their abusive behaviour and protect victims. The project has produced excellent results in other areas and will compliment other initiatives designed to tackle domestic abuse locally
- Partners are developing a joint approach to commissioning domestic abuse services allowing them to plug gaps and enhance the local offer
- Children's Services are developing a toolkit for front line practitioners to complement partners' existing multi-agency domestic abuse training framework
- Operation Encompass will be rolled out in Dorset making sure schools are informed when the Police have attended an incident of domestic abuse so children can be supported
- Work to challenge perceptions and tolerance of domestic abuse in communities is developing

12. Tackling Domestic Abuse

- 12.1 Domestic abuse is any incident of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of their gender or sexuality.
- 12.2 In Dorset there are a range of services in place to try and tackle issues of domestic abuse and support victims. They include advice and information, outreach support, services for high risk victims and refuge accommodation.
- 12.3 Tackling domestic abuse is a key area of focus for partners and they have agreed, through the CSP, a position statement that sets out their approach:

The Dorset Community Safety Partnership believes domestic abuse, in all forms, is completely unacceptable and not to be tolerated. We are committed to tackling it by preventing abuse from happening, supporting victims and prosecuting offenders.

Prevention – we want to stop domestic abuse from happening altogether. To do that we will focus on actions and initiatives that are preventative so that fewer people become victims.

Victims – victims of domestic abuse, whoever they are, will have access to services that keep them safe and prevent further harm.

Offenders – offenders will be held to account for their actions.

- 12.4 Partners' delivery plans include several actions and initiatives that support the approach. Work is also happening to assess the various service offers available to support victims of domestic abuse, ensure they complement each other and identify gaps in provision.

Response to Domestic Abuse During the Covid 19 Pandemic

- 12.5 Monitoring and responding to issues of domestic abuse has been a priority for partners during the pandemic.
- 12.6 Although partners have not seen dramatic increases in the number of domestic abuse crimes, there has been a 23% increase in the number of domestic abuse incidents from January – December 2020 compared to the same period the previous year (see table below). Services also saw an increase in demand for advice and information and reported that cases were more complex due to other challenges associated with the pandemic and lockdowns.

	Domestic Abuse Violent Crime		Domestic Abuse Incidents	
Period / Year	2019	2020	2019	2020
Jan – March	544	662	416	498
April – June	747	793	652	759
July – Sept	799	816	667	802
Oct – Dec	742	669	605	815
Totals	2,832	2,940	2,340	2,874

12.7 During the first lockdown, partners met weekly to understand and address any issues. The approach included:

- Regular contact with front line services to understand issues and develop solutions to any problems.
- Providing additional Covid related funding to some commissioned services to help manage pressures and ensure those who needed a service got one.
- Supporting bids for external funding (e.g. Ministry of Justice) to help bolster services.
- Working with colleagues across the Council to provide additional support and mitigate pressure on services.
- Running weekly communications campaigns to raise awareness of issues and advice on where to get help and support

12.8 Domestic abuse services have continued to be provided throughout the pandemic with commissioners and providers working closely to adapt provision and meet demand.

12.9 On entering the latest lockdown, partners have reinstated fortnightly partnership meetings, are working on appropriate communications campaigns and keeping in touch with front line services to understand needs and issues.

13. Recommendations from Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs)

13.1 The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 requires that following a domestic homicide, local areas organise a multi-agency review. The requirement came into force in April 2011. In 2013 the Home Office released statutory guidance giving further details regarding the conduct of DHRs. This was revised in 2016. Responsibility for conducting reviews lies with CSPs.

- 13.2 DHRs are conducted in cases where the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from domestic abuse by a relation or someone they had been in an intimate personal relationship; or someone they live with. In 2016 the guidance was updated and a review must also be undertaken where a victim took their own life (suicide) and the circumstances give rise to concern, for example there was coercive controlling behaviour in the relationship.
- 13.3 Statutory guidance sets timescales to complete each part of the review process. Any changes to the timescales must be agreed formally by the CSP. The Home Office have established a quality assurance process to sign off all DHRs. Following this, CSPs are expected to publish anonymised reports regarding the review unless there are exceptional circumstances not to do so.
- 13.4 The purpose of conducting reviews is to help improve practice and the way services respond to domestic abuse and each review contains recommendations for partners to act on.
- 13.5 Since the requirement to conduct DHRs was introduced, the Dorset CSP has received thirteen requests to consider a review. Of these, two did not meet the criteria, three have been transferred to other CSPs to lead, five are ongoing and three have been completed.
- 13.6 The Dorset CSP reviews actions and activity relating to DHRs every quarter. At the meeting of the Council's Crime & Disorder Committee in October 2019, it was confirmed the Committee should review DHR activity relevant to Dorset Council.
- 13.7 From the DHRs completed to date, themes have emerged that are relevant to Dorset Council as well as other organisations. They include:
- Risk assessment and management
 - Identification and understanding of domestic abuse
 - Information sharing
 - Developing a whole family approach

13.8 In response Council services and partners have:

- Completed audits and quality assurance work on relevant processes for organisations to apply the learning
- Revised significantly partners' process for managing high risk cases of domestic abuse moving from monthly Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) meetings to shorter, more focused meetings that take place four days a week
- Implemented a multi-agency training framework for staff covering key areas such as risk assessment and management, interfamilial abuse and abuse against older people
- Introduced a process which takes account of the needs and risks to all family members when working with high risk cases of domestic abuse

13.9 The CSP regularly assesses progress against DHR recommendations and takes action to address any areas of concern.

14. Priorities for the Next Twelve Months

14.1 The CSP is in the process of writing its latest PSA. The PSA will be used to determine priorities for the next financial year and complete the annual refresh of the Community Safety Plan.

14.2 The process for writing the PSA includes an assessment of statistics, trends, impacts and forecasts to score issues and organise them in order of priority. Members of the public's views on community safety issues also form part of partners' planning processes.

14.3 Issues such as domestic abuse, anti-social behaviour, modern slavery and serious sexual offences regularly emerge as key priorities.

14.4 Understanding and responding to community safety issues related to the pandemic will remain a priority and partners will continue to work closely with front line services to manage any pressures.

14.5 The Domestic Abuse Bill is currently making its way through Parliamentary proceedings and is due to become law in April 2021, when it will be known as the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

14.6 The Act will place several new responsibilities on partners, including the Council. Although it is not expected that public bodies will have to be compliant by April 2021, work is underway to ensure partners are well placed to respond to their new duties.

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.