

CABINET

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KENT AND MEDWAY DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Adrian Gulvin, Portfolio Holder for Resources
Report from: James Williams, Director for Public Health
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Summary

This report seeks Cabinet approval of the multi-agency Domestic Abuse Strategy across Kent and Medway. The Strategy outlines 5 priority areas agreed by partners and consulted on with the public. Medway will own a local action plan aligned to the Strategy that will be governed by the Medway domestic abuse sub-group that reports into the Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

1. Budget and policy framework

- 1.1. Reducing and preventing Domestic Abuse helps to meet the Council Plan targets of healthy resilient communities and children achieving their potential at school.
- 1.2. Reducing Domestic Abuse is also a key target within the Medway Community Safety Plan.
- 1.3. The Council already invests into Domestic Abuse services and training. The Strategy does not require further financial commitment but rather a partnership commitment to work in a more effective way to reduce levels of Domestic Abuse.

2. Background

- 2.1. In October 2017, the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Executive Group was established with standing representation from Kent Police, Kent County Council, Medway Council, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, the National Probation Service, Kent and Medway CCGs and District Councils. One of the key responsibilities of this group is to enable joint collaborative working across this countywide agenda, to manage the construction of strategy and the implementation of actions across partners.

- 2.2. Nationally, the draft Domestic Abuse Bill was published in January 2019 and is currently moving through Parliament. The Bill brings forward a number of legislative changes including the appointment of a Domestic Abuse Commissioner who will seek consistency of service over areas and evidence of the consideration of children, minority and marginalised groups within the policy and delivery of services. In October 2019, the government confirmed new statutory duties linked to accommodation-based domestic abuse services (which will come into force once the Domestic Abuse Bill is passed).
- 2.3. Within this context the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group has overseen the development of the Domestic Abuse Strategy, which formulates priorities across sectors and organisations, and the development and implementation of the multi-agency action plan to deliver this Strategy. In the absence of a co-ordinating officer, this work has been led by Kent County Council with vital input from partners including Police, the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office, Medway Council, the NHS and probation services.

3. Advice and analysis

- 3.1. The Domestic Abuse Strategy aims to prevent and reduce domestic abuse in Kent and Medway through collective working across partners to strengthen preventive activity, improve support for those who have suffered from abuse, and make better use of the combined resources across agencies. Many different services and providers support families and individuals affected by domestic abuse. This Strategy will drive the development of action to better connect the work across partners, focussing on the same objectives, enabling the strongest response and services possible.
- 3.2. Addressing Domestic Abuse and reducing the impact on families is a key part of our journey to improving outcomes for children. Ofsted noted that domestic abuse is a significant variable in many of our referrals into children's social care. This Strategy helps identify that reducing this is not an outcome that social care can achieve alone but working with our statutory partners on an agreed set of priorities enables us to take a system wide approach.

3.3. The 5 key priorities are described below (from page 7 of the strategy):



- 3.4. The Strategy is also accompanied by a Strategic Assessment which brings together data across different partner organisations so that we are able to understand how effectively services are meeting need across Kent and Medway and identify areas of improvement. Strong data collection which provides comparable information is a key area of development identified within the Strategy, and something we are keen to improve moving forward.
- 3.5. The Strategy is linked to a localised action plan which has been developed through the sub group of the Community Safety Partnership and outlines how local actions will help us achieve the Strategy outcomes. This is a 'live' document and will be updated more frequently than the overarching Strategy.
- 3.6. Medway Public Health already fund a Domestic Abuse Coordinator post and have agreed with the executive that this role can work together with the countywide post to enable delivery of the plan.

4. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Strategy does not have an impact on local rates of Domestic Abuse	There is a risk that the Strategy is too broad across Kent and Medway to have an impact of local rates of Domestic Abuse.	A localised plan developed across local multi-agency partners will help ensure that the priorities of the Strategy are embedded within Medway	D2
Strategy does not get implemented	Once written the Strategy does not get embedded into partner agency's day to day business and therefore does not effect change.	The K&M Executive Group meets quarterly to review progress against the Strategy. Senior representation from key partners are represented at the executive and can help ensure that any issues become resolved.	D2

5. Consultation

- 5.1. The consultation was launched for the Strategy on 8 July 2019 and closed on 20 September 2019. Due to the proposed audience and the purpose of the Strategy the consultation process was aimed at partners and providers but was also open to the public.
- 5.2. The consultation was hosted on Kent County Council's consultation portal; as a partnership document the consultation was also advertised on the Kent Police and Medway Council's site.
- 5.3. In order to raise awareness, partners:
 - distributed the consultation information across our partners
 - distributed the consultation information to our providers
 - worked through the Domestic Abuse Forums to increase awareness through their contacts
 - worked with Safeguarding Boards to distribute information
 - issued a press release
 - raised awareness internally with our staff
 - posted information on our social media platforms
 - directly emailed key stakeholders

5.4. There were 43 responses to the consultation. 15 responses were from professionals working in services which support people affected by domestic abuse, 19 people responded as individuals and 5 listed responding on behalf of an organisation. Many people responding to the consultation were survivors of domestic abuse or had a family member or friend who had been affected by domestic abuse (22).

5.5. Full details about the outcome of the consultation can be found in Appendix 2.

6. Financial implications

6.1. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

6.2. The Strategy does not require financial commitment. The Council already invests in local domestic abuse services including commissioned support for medium and high-risk victims, early help domestic abuse specialists as well as a range of housing support including refuges.

6.3. Through the Public Health Grant the Council funds a Domestic Abuse co-ordinator role and it is this post that will take responsibility for the development and implementation of the local action plan to address the strategic priorities.

7. Legal implications

7.1. The key implications for Medway Council will be that the Bill will place a statutory duty on the Council to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children within refuges and other safe accommodation. It will further place a four-part statutory framework for the delivery of support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation.

8. Recommendation

8.1. The Cabinet is asked to approve the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy, as set out at Appendix 2 to the report.

9. Suggested reasons for decision

9.1. Reducing and preventing domestic abuse will improve outcomes for families and residents living in Medway. By approving the Strategy, Cabinet will be committing Medway Council to work alongside our key statutory partners to reduce the incidences of domestic abuse, better support victims and empower them to come forward and report in an environment where they will feel supported to take perpetrators to justice.

Lead officer contact

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy 2020 - 2023

Appendix 2 - DA Strategy Consultation Summary

Appendix 3 – Diversity Impact Assessment

Background Papers

None.