

CABINET

29 NOVEMBER 2011

UPDATE ON DOMESTIC ABUSE

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Mike O'Brien, Community Safety and Customer Contact

Report from: Neil Davies, Chief Executive

Author: Deborah Upton, Assistant Director (Housing & Corporate Services)

Summary

This report seeks to update Members on the progress made in improvements to domestic abuse services within Medway, and on the way forward.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 Reducing domestic abuse and minimising its impact on families and children is a priority for Medway's Community Safety Partnership and Medway Safeguarding Children's Board (part of the Children's Trust arrangements). There is multi agency commitment to the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy 2010/13 which has the following priorities:
- Reduce domestic abuse and change attitudes
 - Provide support for victims of domestic abuse
 - Protect victims of domestic abuse
 - Improve multi agency working, including information sharing.
- 1.2 It is important that Medway Council and its partners play their part in pan Kent arrangements where it is efficient to do so and maximises outcomes for children and families. It is equally important that where a Medway specific and targeted approach is required, all partners work together locally to deliver that. Domestic abuse incidents reported to the police in Medway account for 18% of the total incidents in Kent, a disproportionately high figure. Domestic abuse is a component in just over 40% of cases where children are made subject to child protection plans, and domestic abuse was a feature in both of Medway's recent serious case reviews.

2. Progress to date

- 2.1 Our focus has been on supporting all victims of domestic abuse, adults and children. This reinforces that responding appropriately to domestic abuse is the responsibility of all agencies, establishing the capacity within agencies,

particularly those working predominantly with adults, to recognise the impact that domestic abuse can have on children and to take appropriate action.

- 2.2 There are areas of good practice already being carried out in Medway as a whole area, with our partners. For example:-
- We have consulted on and relaunched the thresholds for children's services – from universal support to child protection, clarifying roles and responsibilities and signposting agencies to the support they or the family can access
 - Appointed a specialist domestic abuse nurse in Medway Community Health Care – audit shows awareness of domestic abuse has increased in 80% of clinical services and consultation support provided by the nurse evidences greater focus on domestic abuse by health professionals
 - Established safeguarding leads in 41 out of the 57 GP practices, with specific support on domestic abuse provided through domestic abuse nurse
- 2.3 In addition, in September 2011 a specialist domestic violence court was set up in Medway to cover the North Kent bench area. This is partly funded by Medway Council and provides victims of domestic abuse with access to an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) who helps to support victims through the process of prosecution and to ensure that they remain safe with appropriate support.

3. The Way Forward

- 3.1 A review was undertaken of domestic abuse within Medway and it is clear that there is still much work to do to reduce instances of domestic abuse and to ensure the effectiveness of interventions for early help. Ownership of the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy has not sat with any one organisation or group within Medway, nor has it been monitored or taken forward on a Medway basis. The lack of co-ordination within Medway potentially caused a duplication of effort and failure to target resources most effectively. In recognition of the need to develop a more tailored response to Medway's issues, the Community Safety Partnership established a sub group to lead on the delivery of Medway's response. The chair of this sub group also reports on progress to MSCB.
- 3.2 The sub-group comprises senior representatives from the Police, Children's Services, Housing Services, Public Health, the Kent & Medway Domestic Abuse Co-Ordinator, CPS, Court Service, Probation and the Chair of the MDAF (Medway Domestic Abuse Forum). Together they have agreed an action plan for taking forward areas which were highlighted by the review as being high priority, and a copy of the improvement plan is attached as Appendix One.
- 3.3 Key priority areas are:-
- Delivering multi-agency training across Medway with an agreed training programme. At present, training does occur but is provided by a number of different agencies and the sub-group is to take responsibility for ensuring that a programme of training is identified and offered, with support from the MDAF.
 - Delivering a pilot project for child protection referrals through a multi-agency approach with the police, children's services and health.

- Raising awareness of domestic abuse within schools, and ensuring that relationship training is provided to pupils.
- Ensuring that there is an appropriate range of perpetrator programmes available within Medway, including programmes which work with women who are perpetrators.
- Working with all health providers to ensure that they have an appropriate understanding of domestic abuse

3.4 We are also working to set up a pilot project from January 2012 to place an IDVA in the Accident & Emergency Department at Medway Maritime, to ensure that victims of domestic abuse are identified and provided with advice and support at an early stage.

4. Risk management

4.1 Risk management is an integral part of good governance. The Council has a responsibility to identify and manage threats and risks to achieve its strategic objectives and enhance the value of services it provides to the community.

4.2

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk
Failure to deliver the priorities set out in the Kent & Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy or the improvement plan attached to this report	Failure to deliver the targeted priorities or the improvement plan which highlights the areas identified could mean an increase in the numbers of victims of domestic abuse in Medway with the consequent risks of family breakdown, child protection issues, potential homelessness and health related issues	Ensure that the improvement plan and KMDA Strategy are regularly monitored by the Sub-Group and progress is reported to the CSP, MSCB and Children's Trust.

5. Financial and legal implications

5.1 There are no financial or legal implications arising directly from this report.

6. Recommendations

6.1 That Members note the contents of the report and endorse the improvement plan, and request that progress is reported to Cabinet every six months.

7. Suggested reasons for decision(s)

7.1 To ensure that domestic abuse and the consequent issues it raises are given a clear focus within Medway and that the Cabinet can be assured that progress is being made.

Lead officer contact

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Background Papers: None

Medway Domestic Violence
Improvement Plan 2011 / 2012
Plan number 1

Domestic Abuse Sub Group

Action no	Actions	Outputs / Outcomes	Resources	Dates	Revised Dates	Lead Officer	Measures of success	Risk - ability to deliver action	Risk - ability to deliver outcomes of actions
Reduce domestic abuse and change attitudes									
2	Deliver relationship training to schools and connections	Helping children recognise ??	Tools, lesson plans for teachers AG to liaise with AB.	Dec-11		Alison Barnett /Jinny Robinson	Take up rate of schools Reduction in the amount of domestic abuse between teenagers	Low	Low
3	Raising awareness of DA within the education environment	Increase in the number of DA referrals from schools to appropriate services	AG to send info to JS	Nov-11		Juliet Sevier	Provide Head Teachers with materials to display in schools Resources centre to be set up by PSHE advisors Deliver a Head Teachers briefing	Low	Low
4	Development of an out of hours help line	Develop the help line by monitor usage to set baseline and year on year increase of usage	Central Referral Unit Out of hours service.	Update on options 01/11/2011		Andy Pritchard	Review the possibility of housing services providing this help line Running a campaign with the licensing trade once help line established	Low	Low
Provide support to victims of domestic abuse									

1	Ensure North Kent Domestic Violence Courts are sitting	Increase in victims supported by IDVA escaping DA	IDVA funded by Medway Housing Services	Sep-11		Chris Turner	Increase in successful prosecutions & guilty pleas	Low	Medium
2	Pilot project for all CP referrals through multi agency approach	Lead agency appointed for each referral enabling better view of victims needs	Childrens Services, Police & Named Nurse	Nov-11		Andy Pritchard	Referrals appropriately signposted & services tailored for clients	Low	Low
	Work with GP services, health visitors & midwives to ensure that they have an appropriate understanding of DA	Each provider to have own DA training plan.		Feb-12		Alison Barnett/Andrew Coombes			
3	Work with Probation Services to ensure that 1:1 work is available locally for female perpetrators	Reduction in the number of female perpetrators	Probation + unspecified funding	Mar-12		Maurice O'Reilly	Local 1:1 programme set up for Medway with Medway based perpetrators enrolled	Low	Low
Protect victims of domestic abuse									
1	Ensure there is an appropriate range of perpetrator programmes available for all agencies to refer in to	Reduced repeat victims of DA	Probation + St Giles Trust unspecified funding	Mar-12		Maurice O'Reilly	Review of current provision Implementation of recommendations Incorporate into the training plan	Low	Medium

2	Ensure DA strategy for mental health service is in place including named nurse for mental health services	Caroline Brant currently writing the strategy	KMPT	Dec-11		Alison Barnett/Andrew Coombes		Low	Low
3	Provide safe-houses for those in temporary accomodation need (rather than refuge place)	Reduces the risk of victims returning home due to quality of accomodation or safety issues	Housing Services	Oct-11		Deborah Upton	% use of accomodation		
4	Evaluation of services provided by the Prisons/Young people secure estate	Appropriate programmes in Prisons leading to a reduction in re-offending		tbc		Adult safeguarding board DQT MSCB		Low	Low
Multi agency working									
1	Publish a training plan accessible to all agencies, tailored to local issues and targeted	Consistency of decision making and helping staff deal with a range of situations and victims	Admin support from Medway Council to coordinate training and provide venue	Start Nov 2011		Deborah Upton	- Number of attendees across the range of services - Evaluation of learning	Low	Medium