

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee Corporate Services and Community Safety
Date of Committee 8th December 2009
Report Title Domestic Abuse – A Strategy for Warwickshire: 1 Year Progress Report
Summary A 1 Year Progress Report on the Warwickshire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2008 -2011.

For further information please contact:

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Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? No.

Background papers Warwickshire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2008 - 2011

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:-

Details to be specified

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Other Committees | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Local Member(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Not applicable |
| Other Elected Members | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Cllr Appleton, Cllr Davis, Cllr Chattaway |
| Cabinet Member | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Cllr Hobbs |
| Chief Executive | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Legal | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Jane Pollard |
| Finance | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Chris Kaye |
| Other Chief Officers | <input type="checkbox"/> | |

District Councils

Health Authority

Police

Other Bodies/Individuals

FINAL DECISION **No**

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

Further consideration by
this Committee

To Council

To Cabinet

To an O & S Committee

To an Area Committee

Further Consultation

Agenda No

Corporate Services and Community Safety O&S Committee – 8th December 2009.

Domestic Abuse Strategy 2008 – 2011 1 Year Progress Report

Report of the Strategic Director of Customers, Workforce and Governance

Recommendation

That the Corporate Services and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the attached Domestic Abuse Strategy 2008 -2011 1 Year Report and comments upon it.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Warwickshire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2008 – 2011 and accompanying annual actions plan show how partner agencies aim to improve the quality of life for people within the county by tackling the causes and effects of domestic abuse.
- 1.2 This Report demonstrates the progress being made in delivering the outcomes identified in the strategy and identifies areas for discussion and potential remedial action.

2 Warwickshire's Aims

- 2.1 Our aim is to enable those experiencing domestic abuse to make changes in their lives through the provision of structured support. In particular we aim to:
 - Prevent and reduce the incidents of domestic abuse across Warwickshire, to reduce repeat victimisation and to protect victims and their children from abuse.
 - Provide an empathetic and supportive response to victims and their children from all appropriate agencies and consult with service users on the quality and appropriateness of services provided.

3 Outcomes

- 3.1 The overall success of the strategy and action plan will be reported through the Local Area Agreement (LAA) for National Indicator 15: Serious Violent Crime. This indicator will be measured across the three years of the Local Area Agreement.

3.2 Performance against strategic outcomes:

	2007 - 2008	2008 - 2009	2009 - 2010	Direction
Number of domestic abuse incidents reported to the police	7156	8055	3932 Q1-2 Predicted year end 7864	Amber
Number of perpetrators charged and going to court	419 total 393 Magistrates 26 Crown Court	409 Magistrates only	173 to date Predicted year end 346 Magistrates only	Red
Number of reported <i>repeat</i> incidents of domestic abuse (recorded through MARACs)	MARACs not in operation	Rate of repeat High Risk incidents: 9.4%	Rate of repeat High Risk incidents: 17.33%	Red

3.3 Performance Commentary

- 3.3.1 Immediately following the 2008 marketing campaign there was a 15% increase in incidents of domestic abuse reported to the police. April – September 2009 has seen a tapering off of incidents being reported, a 4% decrease on the same period in 2008. This may be due to victims having come forward and accessed services earlier, thus preventing further incidents and an escalation in violence.
- 3.3.2 We will continue to monitor the number of incidents being reported in order to analyse the trend. If by the end of quarter 4 this year evidence suggests we have hit the peak in terms of incidents being reported the strategic outcome may need to be amended.
- 3.3.3 Although the rate of repeat victimisation amongst high risk victims is increasing, a recent independent report suggests this is because victims are now confident in reporting incidents at an earlier stage. It may also be due to services “flagging and tagging” their systems more robustly so as we progress the rate of repeat victimisation will continue to rise.
- 3.3.4 Warwickshire’s average of 17% is still well below the national average of 24% repeat victimisation for high risk victims. A mature MARAC should expect a repeat rate of 33%.
- 3.3.5 The Independent Domestic Violence Advisory (IDVA) Service is specifically designed to reduce repeat victimisation and encourage victims to support a prosecution where a crime has been committed. Lack of victim support for a prosecution is one of the main reasons the number of perpetrators charged is so low. The service was specifically commissioned to deliver on Warwickshire’s strategic outcomes and the 2009 – 10 Criminal Justice data should reflect the work they are undertaking with victims.

4 Progress on Key Objectives

4.1 Five key objectives for this strategy were agreed by Cabinet in September 2008. Progress is outlined under each objective.

5 Safety and Support

5.1 To ensure that the safety and support needs of those experiencing domestic abuse are met through well-resourced, safe, accessible services.

5.2 Achievements/ progress

5.2.1 We are working with Supporting People to undertake an independent Strategic Review of all services for people affected by domestic abuse in Warwickshire. The Strategic Review will enable Warwickshire to move to a more co-ordinated pattern of support service provision giving service users the opportunity to have a say in how their support is delivered.

5.2.2 The Strategic Review will:

- Provide clear direction of how to move from current service provision to a planned desired mix of providers and services to meet the required strategic and service user outcomes.
- Improve services to the specified client group
- Improve value for money
- Ensure alignment between commissioners of domestic abuse services

5.2.3 The initial report is due in January 2010.

5.2.4 The development of the Warwickshire Domestic Abuse Helpline, run by WCC has continued, with a new free-phone telephone number. Since the launch of the new free-phone number, calls have increased by over 100% each month.

5.2.5 In August 2008 Warwickshire Police began using a new dynamic risk assessment for victims of domestic abuse, resulting in a more comprehensive classification of risk and a way of measuring whether the risk posed to the victim is increasing or decreasing over time.

5.2.6 A common risk indicator checklist and assessment tool has been developed nationally. This will provide all agencies with an approved method of measuring/ monitoring risk to victims.

5.2.7 Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) first met in April 2008. MARACs bring agencies together to identify ways to reduce the risks posed to victims of domestic abuse on a case by case basis. In 2008 – 2009 the Warwickshire MARAC reviewed 287 cases. Warwickshire are currently undertaking the MARAC Implementation Programme, a lengthy 3 stage process leading to a recognised quality assurance standard.

5.2.8 The first stage of the implementation Programme was an independent review of the Warwickshire MARAC. Recommendations included:

- All front line staff across all agencies should know how to make a referral to MARACs.
- Development of a MARAC Sharing of Information Protocol to encourage non-attending agencies to engage with the process.

- Development of a Domestic Abuse strategic group in Warwickshire and a MARAC steering group, in the interim, MARAC development could be monitored by WSCP.
- Increased capacity of the IDVA Service.

5.2.9 During the year the Domestic Abuse Outreach Service funded by WCC has been receiving over 400 referrals per quarter.

5.2.10 In March 2009 there were over 100 women on the waiting list for services. To combat this we have funded Supporting People to provide extra Floating Support for victims of domestic abuse.

5.2.11 Between April and September 2009 Rugby's Project Fresh-start (funded by Rugby LSP) has resettled 15 women and 19 children in the community. The project focuses on providing women who have fled domestic abuse with the skills, knowledge and understanding to support sustainable tenancies and integrate themselves and their children into the community.

5.2.12 Another new initiative this year has been the delivery of the Freedom Programme in Warwickshire, funded by WCC. The programme provides an opportunity for women to develop ways of thinking and behaving to protect themselves, their children and others from harm. It teaches skills that are necessary in order for survivors of domestic abuse to resettle and maintain their independence.

5.2.13 A Domestic Abuse Policy for Warwickshire County Council is being developed, in order to protect and support staff who are victims of domestic abuse.

6 Protection and Justice

6.1 To ensure that perpetrators are both supported to change their behaviour and held accountable through a co-ordinated response, which does not compromise the safety of victims and children.

6.2 Achievements/ Progress

6.2.1 The IDVA Service has been operational since 1st June 2009. This provides an intensive support service for an extra 40 high risk victims each month, focussing on support through the criminal justice system. The aim of the service is to decrease repeat victimisation and increase the number of victims supporting prosecutions, thus making it a key service in delivering on Warwickshire's strategic outcomes. The service is currently subsidised by the Ministry of Justice, however it will become reliant on WCC funding in future.

6.2.2 Nuneaton and Bedworth CDRP have piloted the 'Breaking the Cycle' initiative in Nuneaton focussing on preventing repeat victimisation. Since April this year there has been a 30% reduction in repeat incidents reported by the families involved in the project.

6.2.3 Victim Support have launched the "Visual Evidence for Victims Scheme" in Stratford and Warwick Districts, funded by South Warwickshire CDRP. Staff are trained to take instant photographs of injuries and/or damage to property that has been caused by domestic abuse. These photographs can then be stored and used as evidence up to 6 years later. The evidence can be used

for Supporting a Criminal Injuries Compensation Claim, reporting the crime to the police, and civil proceedings.

- 6.2.4 The 3 above initiatives have contributed to fewer victim statements being retracted; and both have contributed to the conviction rate (of those perpetrators charged with an offence) continually rising. Warwickshire has the highest conviction rate (of perpetrators charged) in England and Wales at 87%. However in only 5.85% of incidents or 22% of crimes that have been reported to the police are the perpetrators charged with an offence (see table in 3.3 above). It is hoped that the new Crown prosecution Service Violence against Women Strategy will lead to an increase in the number of perpetrators being charged and held to account for their actions in court.
- 6.2.5 The recommendations of the Specialist Domestic Abuse Court (SDAC) National Steering Group have been completed. However, at present only 54% of domestic abuse cases are heard in the SDAC. The Warwickshire SDAC steering group is currently undertaking a period of process mapping with the aim of all Magistrates cases being heard in the SDAC.
- 6.2.6 Warwickshire's Magistrates have received Ministry of justice funding to receive revised training on domestic abuse which will include information on sentencing and the services available for vulnerable victims.
- 6.2.7 Perpetrators who are convicted of a criminal offence may be referred to the Probation Service's Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP). Area Based Grant funding has been made available to employ extra staff to increase the capacity of the IDAP. This will decrease the waiting time for those already sentenced and give magistrates the confidence to use this as a sentencing option.
- 6.2.8 The Domestic Abuse Counselling Service's Perpetrator Intervention Programme can be accessed by perpetrators on a voluntary basis. The programme is now available countywide following funding from the National Lottery. This will provide counselling to an extra 30 perpetrators a year in order to help them change their behaviour. Support is also provided for the victims' of perpetrators on the programme to ensure their safety remains paramount.

7 Prevention and early intervention

- 7.1 To reduce incidents of domestic abuse and ensure that it is confronted and challenged so that victims, perpetrators and families can access services earlier.

7.2 Achievements/ Progress

- 7.2.1 A strong Communications Strategy has been implemented involving targeted press releases, Warwickshire Against Domestic Abuse campaign materials and website, and the Warwickshire Against Domestic Abuse multi-agency Newsletter.
- 7.2.2 The Warwickshire Against Domestic Abuse website, www.talk2someone.org.uk has continued to flourish. Compared to the same period in 2008, from April – October 2009 there has been an increase in traffic

to the site of 200%. It is predicted that the site will have been visited 20,000 times in 2009.

- 7.2.3 Phase 3 of the marketing campaign is being launched at the end of November, with the aim of encouraging victims to come forward and seek help. It is hoped this will again lead to an increase in first time incidents being reported to the police.
- 7.2.4 A comprehensive multi-agency training programme has been devised and delivered including Forced Marriage Protection Orders, Domestic Abuse and Disability, Domestic abuse in same sex relationships and Domestic Abuse and Child protection. (115 professionals from a range of agencies have received domestic abuse training in 2009.)
- 7.2.5 The Sanctuary Scheme has re-launched, with WCC funding and with Warwickshire Police as the service managers. The scheme enables victims of domestic abuse to remain in their own accommodation. Where the perpetrator has left the home, extra security measures are installed, for example, reinforcing front and back doors, installing intruder alarms, and 'tagging' properties with the emergency services. Support Services are also engaged with the victim. Between April and October 2009, 77 victims of domestic abuse have benefitted from the Sanctuary scheme, protecting 127 children.
- 7.2.6 The Domestic Abuse and Alcohol Project continues to work with victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse. Of the 38 perpetrators who engaged with the pilot project, 26 completed the full programme. Of those completing the programme, 71% have not since re-offended and 73% have reduced their alcohol consumption. The success evidenced by the project has led to further funding through the Area Based Grant in order to deliver the scheme county wide.
- 7.2.7 The Primary Care Trust has established a working group to develop a domestic abuse policy for health care services, including a care pathway for victims of abuse. This work will ensure all health visitors and midwives have the necessary skills to identify and manage cases of domestic abuse.

8 Children and young people

- 8.1 To ensure children and young people who have witnessed domestic abuse are able to access appropriate services and that children and young people are given the skills to build relationships based on respect and equality.

8.2 Achievements/ Progress

- 8.2.1 The "Warwickshire Children's Services Outcomes Strategy For Children and Young People Affected By Domestic Abuse" has been completed. The strategy aims to improve the outcomes and quality of life for children and young people in Warwickshire affected by domestic abuse.
- 8.2.2 The new Common Assessment Framework is providing an early opportunity to identify children affected by domestic abuse.
- 8.2.3 The "Feeling Safe" therapeutic group work programme for children affected by domestic abuse and the non-abusing carer is now being delivered by Family Support Workers in locality settings across Warwickshire.

- 8.2.4 Warwickshire Domestic Violence Support Services are delivering both Children's Counselling and a Children's Advocacy service county wide.
- 8.2.5 A joint working group with, Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board and Warwickshire Police and Warwickshire Race Equality Partnership has been established to develop an action plan to help prevent children and young people being subjected to forced marriage.

9 Next steps - Building on progress and meeting new challenges

9.1 Increasing the number of perpetrators held to account through the criminal justice system

- 9.1.1 Evidence from Warwickshire Police suggests that while the number of incidents of domestic abuse that are reported remain high, the number of crimes is falling, implying that more emotional abuse is being reported. Indeed, the overall serious violent crime rate in Warwickshire has fallen.
- 9.1.2 Where a crime has been committed, domestic abuse is acknowledged to be a difficult crime to prosecute. All too often there are no independent witnesses/evidence to what took place "behind closed doors".
- 9.1.3 Warwickshire Police continue to develop their evidence gathering techniques in order to increase the number of prosecutions where a crime has been committed. 2009 -10 will see an implementation plan for the use of digital recordings of 999 calls to be used in interviews with perpetrators in order to secure an early guilty plea.
- 9.1.4 The CPS has recently launched a new Policy for Prosecuting Cases of Domestic Abuse which should increase prosecutors' awareness of domestic abuse.

9.2 Reducing repeat victimisation

- 9.2.1 In the immediate future we must be prepared for the repeat victimisation rate relating to high risk victims to rise, due to:
- Agencies flagging and tagging cases more robustly
 - Victims having more confidence in services and reporting incidents at an earlier stage.
- 9.2.2 However, the IDVA Service is working to decrease repeat victimisation and so once a victim has accessed services the intensive level of support offered should help to maintain a steady rate of repeat victimisation over all.

10 Recommendation

- 10.1 That the Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers this Domestic Abuse Strategy 2008 -2011: 1 year Progress Report and comments upon it.

David Carter
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Customers Workforce and Governance