

Community Protection O&S Committee - 31st March 2009.

Domestic Abuse Strategy 2008 – 2011 6 Month Progress Report

Report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development

Recommendation

That the Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the attached Domestic Abuse Strategy 2008 -2011 6 Month 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:
 - 2.1.1 Prevent and reduce the incidents of domestic abuse across Warwickshire, to reduce repeat victimisation and to protect victims and their children from abuse.
 - 2.1.2 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 Further targets to be used to assess the success of the Domestic Abuse Strategy are:

- 3.2.1 Increase in number of first time reporting of domestic abuse
- 3.2.2 Increase in the number of perpetrators charged and going to court
- 3.2.3 Increase in numbers of children and young people affected by domestic abuse provided with support – no measure currently available.
- 3.2.4 Reduction in numbers of reported repeat incidents of domestic abuse

3.3 Performance against Outcomes in 3.2 above:

	2007 - 2008	2008 - 2009	Direction
Number of domestic abuse incidents reported to the police	7156	Actual to date: 6758 Predicted year end: 8200	Green
Number of perpetrators charged and going to court	419 total 393 Magistrates 26 Crown Court	April – Dec 2008 272 total Predicted year end 363	Red
Number of reported <i>repeat</i> incidents of domestic abuse	Jan – Dec 2007 1140 repeat perpetrators responsible for 3841 incidents. 3.36 incidents per repeat perpetrator	Jan – Dec 2008 1105 repeat perpetrators responsible for 3235 incidents. 2.92 incidents per repeat perpetrator	Green

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 The development of the Warwickshire Domestic Abuse Helpline has continued, with a new free-phone telephone number. Since the launch of the new free-phone number, calls have increased by 125%.
- 5.2.2 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. This can inform case officers as to whether actions/ measures in place are being effective, where resources are most needed and most effectively targeted.
- 5.2.3 A common risk indicator checklist and assessment tool has been developed nationally and will be used by agencies across Warwickshire from April 2009.
- 5.2.4 Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) first met in April 2008 and were reviewed in October 2008. MARACs bring agencies together to identify ways to reduce the risks posed to victims of domestic abuse on a case by case basis. The reduction in repeat perpetrators and the number of

incidents they commit (shown in 3.3 above) can be in part attributed to the work of the MARACs.

- 5.2.5 Warwickshire are about to embark on the MARAC Implementation Programme, a 3 stage process leading to a recognised quality assurance standard.
- 5.2.6 The Independent Domestic Violence Advisor Service has been tendered and the contract let from 1st January. This will provide an intensive support service for an extra 40 high risk victims each month, focussing on support through the criminal justice system.
- 5.2.7 Multi-agency training has been delivered to 50 professionals in Warwickshire on the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007 and the Forced Marriage Protection Orders created by the act.
- 5.2.8 A Domestic Abuse Policy for Warwickshire County Council staff is being developed, to include a communications plan.

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 Warwickshire Police have piloted the 'Breaking the Cycle' initiative in Nuneaton focussing on preventing repeat victimisation. The initiative will be evaluated during 2009 – 2010. Early results show a decrease in incidents reported by the couples on the 2 projects of 47% and 27% respectively.
- 6.2.2 Warwickshire Police have invested in new evidence gathering technology to facilitate perpetrators being held to account for their actions. The technology includes "head cams" being worn when officers attend domestic abuse incidents to capture evidence at the scene of the crime, and digital recording of 999 calls which can then be downloaded and played in interviews with the perpetrator and in court.
- 6.2.3 Victim Support have launched the "Visual Evidence for Victim's Scheme" in Stratford and Warwick Districts. 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 Both initiatives have contributed to less 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%.
- 6.2.5 The recommendations of the Specialist Domestic Abuse Court (SDAC) National Steering Group have been implemented. These include:
 - 6.2.5.1 Sittings now in the morning to take account of solicitors often requiring further information, and parents accompanying children to and from school.

- 6.2.5.2 Police provide a 'Single Point of Contact' (SPOC) in each district/ borough to be available to provide further information to the court if required.
- 6.2.5.3 Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) Service has been awarded to 'Refuge'. The service will be operational in April 2009.
- 6.2.5.4 When the IDVA Service is operational the SDAC Steering group will evolve into a Strategic Group and an Operational Group.

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. Since the launch of the campaign there has been a 15% increase in incidents of domestic abuse reported to the police. This has been accompanied by a 22% increase in "hits" to the new website compared to the old website, and a 125% increase in calls to the new free-phone helpline number.
- 7.2.2 A comprehensive multi-agency training programme has been devised and includes Forced Marriage Protection Orders, Domestic Abuse and Disability, and Domestic Abuse and Child protection. (164 professionals from a range of agencies have received domestic abuse training in 2008 - 2009)
- 7.2.3 The Sanctuary Scheme has re-launched, 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. In 2007 – 2008 51 victims received a service from the Sanctuary Scheme.
- 7.2.4 The Domestic Abuse and Alcohol Project continues to work with victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse in Nuneaton and Bedworth. Of the 38 perpetrators who engaged with the project, 26 completed the full programme. Of those completing the programme 71% have not since re-offended.
- 7.2.5 Community Midwives have attended workshops on Domestic abuse as a non-obstetric risk factor, and Midwives in Rugby have been trained to screen all service users for 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 new Common Assessment Framework is providing an early opportunity to identify children affected by domestic abuse.
- 8.2.2 The “Feeling Safe” therapeutic group work programme is being developed to be delivered by Family Support Workers in locality settings.
- 8.2.3 The Warwickshire Sharing of Information protocol has been agreed.
- 8.2.4 The Taking Care Programme continues to educate children and young people about healthy relationships.
- 8.2.5 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.

9 Next steps - Building on progress and meeting new challenges

9.1 Capacity building to meet demand for services

- 9.1.1 A key challenge at present is building capacity across all sectors in order to meet the significant increase in demand for services. Since 2005 there has been a 96% increase in the number of domestic abuse incidents reported to the police, but service capacity has increased at a significantly slower rate.
- 9.1.2 Plans are being developed with Supporting People to undertake a joint Strategic Review of services for people affected by domestic abuse in Warwickshire. This will allow us to identify how best to increase service capacity and where resources need to be targeted in order to achieve the desired strategic outcomes.

9.2 Criminal Justice Response

- 9.2.1 Recent work has encouraged more victims to report domestic abuse to the police and other agencies. We must now work together to ensure that once incidents are reported the perpetrator of the abuse is held to account for their actions through the criminal justice system and other appropriate routes. These routes include:
 - 9.2.2 Where criminal offences have been committed perpetrators are charged and the case proceeds through the criminal courts. Once a perpetrator is charged with an offence, 87% of cases result in a conviction; however this is only 5.85% of incidents that have been reported to the police (see table in 3.3 above).
 - 9.2.3 Ensuring all domestic abuse cases to be heard by Magistrates are heard in the Specialist Domestic Abuse Courts where staff have received specialist training.
 - 9.2.4 Enforcement of civil injunctions and orders. Where the perpetrator is found to have breached the terms of an order the appropriate response must be followed up e.g. arrest or imprisonment.
 - 9.2.5 Convicted offenders receive swifter access to Probation Service domestic abuse programmes.

9.2.6 Perpetrators voluntarily accessing perpetrator group programmes or individual counselling to support them in changing their behaviour.

10 Recommendation

10.1 That the Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers this Domestic Abuse Strategy 2008 -2011: 6 Month Progress Report and comments upon it

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Development

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