

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee **Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Date of Committee **17th September 2007**

Report Title **Domestic Abuse: Progress Report**

Summary This report is a summary of progress of the last 6 months of Domestic Abuse work across the County

For further information please contact:

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

Background papers None

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- Details to be specified

- Other Committees
- Local Member(s)
- Other Elected Members Cllrs Richard Chattaway, Sarah Boad, Chris Davis and Michael Doody.
- Cabinet Member Cllr Richard Hobbs
- Chief Executive
- Legal Sarah Duxbury
- Finance Helen Murphy
- Other Chief Officers
- District Councils
- Health Authority

Police

Other Bodies/Individuals Michelle McHugh

FINAL DECISION YES

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

Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny Committee

17th September 2007

Domestic Abuse: Progress Report

Recommendation:

That Members consider the progress of Domestic Abuse work across the County.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Domestic abuse is defined as any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been in a relationship together, or are family members, regardless of their gender or sexuality.
- 1.2 The Warwickshire Local Area Agreement Delivery Plan for the Safer Block details actions to reduce the incidence of domestic violence across the county. Progress on domestic violence is being measured against these targets. The four key areas are:
 - (a) Increase the number of domestic violence incidents reported
 - (b) Increase the number of perpetrators charged, going to court and convicted.
 - (c) Reduce the number of repeat perpetrators.
 - (d) Reduce the number of young people under 18 who live with domestic violence at their usual residence.Work on the Local Area Agreement is being undertaken jointly with partners including the Police Domestic Abuse Unit.
- 1.3 The National Domestic Violence Delivery Plan and Best Value Performance Indicators for Actions Against Domestic Violence are guiding the development and review of domestic violence initiatives in the county.

2.0 Domestic Abuse Incidents in Warwickshire

Incidents reported to the Police	*Apr 05-Mar 06	Apr 06-Mar07
North Warwickshire	264	808
Nuneaton and Bedworth	1152	2377
Rugby	588	1186
Stratford	492	826
Warwick	852	1558
Total	3348	6755

*Extrapolated from police data

2.1 In the first six months of 2007, 3575 incidents have been reported to the police, which, if continued at the same rate throughout the year, could see a further increase in 2007/8. This is predominantly due to the higher priority and resources given to domestic abuse by the police, to encourage the reporting and recording of incidents, following fatalities in Warwickshire. All incidents of domestic abuse are now logged and perpetrators arrested where necessary and all victims are now encouraged to report incidents. The incidents reported include abuse amongst family members, not just partners.

2.2 The LAA target for encouraging reporting incidents will now be focused on **first incident** reporting and recording, rather than on repeat incidents (and many of the incidents are repeat incidents at the same address). The consequent increase in numbers of victims will have an increasing impact on the numbers referred for advice and support provided by ourselves and other agencies.

3.0 Local Area Agreement Progress

There are a number of key actions in the Local Area Agreement Delivery Plan which will ensure that LAA outcomes are met. These are set out below, with comments on progress made and further planned actions.

3.1 *Raise the awareness of services available to domestic violence victims:*
A number of new initiatives to support victims of domestic abuse are due to come on line during September and October 2007. The domestic violence manager is currently updating relevant agencies on these services through presentations, training and inter-agency forums. A publicity campaign to raise awareness of services, including press releases, leaflets and posters, will be undertaken during October 2007.

- 3.2 *Provide multi-agency training:*
Training is currently being delivered to all front line police staff, with specialist domestic abuse and alcohol training being offered to domestic abuse officers and custody officers. Training to staff within the Children's, Young People and Families Directorate is being offered by the Safeguarding Children Board. The Domestic Violence Manager is currently planning training with the Enhanced Support Networks team in CYPF and Warwick District Council housing and benefits workers. An ongoing multi-agency training plan and programme will be developed to ensure a quarterly training programme is delivered.
- 3.3 *Develop and implement domestic violence courts:*
Specialist Domestic Violence Courts are due to begin in October 2007 in Rugby, Stratford and Nuneaton. These aim to increase levels of perpetrator prosecution and support the victim through the legal processes, from reporting an incident through to attending court. Funding for an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) has been sought from the Home Office to support the specialist courts. The outcome of this funding bid should be known by the end of September. Interim measures are currently being negotiated with partner agencies to ensure victim safety.
- 3.4 *Development of risk assessment process - MARACs .*
Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACS) are being developed in partnership with a range of agencies which will result in very high risk victims being fully assessed and supported. The protocol for MARACs and is being developed and the scheme should be launched in September 2007.
- 3.5 *Implementation of voluntary perpetrators programme:*
The pilot voluntary perpetrators programme funded from Jan to March 2007 has been extended to March 2008. The pilot is currently taking place in the Nuneaton and Bedworth area and provides a programme of one to one counselling to challenge perpetrators to change their behaviour. The pilot is being carefully monitored to assess its success and determine what services should be commissioned from April 2008. The Probation-led Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme continues to be delivered throughout the county for perpetrators who have a court order to attend.
- 3.6 *Development of alcohol/drug treatment programme to perpetrators:*
Swanswell Charitable Trust has been commissioned to provide a Community Alcohol Worker and Family Support Worker in the field of Domestic Abuse in the Nuneaton and Bedworth area from August 2007. The service will work with perpetrators and victims of domestic abuse where alcohol is a factor, to support them to access alcohol treatment. The service is also linking in with the voluntary perpetrators programme.
- 3.7 *Identification of under 18s affected by Domestic Violence and development of work with families experiencing domestic violence*
Partnership work with Children, Young People and Families is being undertaken to increase support to young people affected by domestic abuse and identify gaps in services.

Links are being developed with Enhanced Support Services to develop multi agency support programmes for families experiencing domestic abuse. Work in this area is also linking in with the Local Area Agreement Children's and Young People's block which also includes targets on supporting children affected by domestic abuse.

3.8 *Increase children's awareness of domestic violence through a schools programme*

Education packs to use in schools are currently being investigated and a programme for Warwickshire will then be developed. It is anticipated that this will be delivered through Children, Young People and Families.

4.0 Other initiatives and future developments

4.1 *County Domestic Abuse Helpline*

A new County Domestic Violence Helpline is being developed which will provide a first point of contact for all victims, perpetrators and agencies concerned about domestic abuse.

4.2 *Sanctuary Scheme*

A new Sanctuary Scheme has been established in Warwickshire since July 2007. This provides additional options to victims of domestic abuse who do not wish to leave their homes. It offers victims who are no longer living with the perpetrator the opportunity to have a 'safe room' in their home where they, and their children, can stay securely and call the police if the perpetrator returns and behaves in a violent manner.

4.3 *Partnership work*

Partnership developments have continued to flourish. WCC have been involved in supporting Warwickshire police to develop their domestic abuse strategy and action plan and are now involved in similar processes with Mental Health services. Issues associated with data collection are being addressed by the new first point of contact services (helpline and outreach) which will make future interrogation of data more valid. A multi agency domestic abuse forum in the North of the county has continued to meet successfully and a similar forum in the South is being re-launched.

4.4 *Strategy*

A new multi-agency domestic abuse strategy will be developed by January 2008 together with a 12 month action plan. The strategy and action plan will be brought to members in January 2008

5.0 Next Steps

5.1 The development of the new strategy will identify and prioritise areas of further work to include in the 12 month action plan. Key areas that have currently been identified include:

(a) Ensuring all victims who are reporting incidents to the police are able to access support.

- (b) Ensuring equitable access to service provision across the county including outreach services, refuge accommodation and perpetrator programmes.
- (c) Addressing a lack of service provision for male victims, same sex victims and victims of inter generational abuse.
- (d) Addressing low level reporting and service access by victims from hard to reach groups including BME communities, the disabled and victims from a range of economic backgrounds.
- (e) Identifying the support needs of children who have witnessed domestic abuse and how to fill gaps in provision.

5.2. Future initiatives including the Home Office proposals to jointly address the issues of sexual violence alongside domestic abuse. This would mean a substantial increase in work load which may prove to be outside the present domestic abuse team's capacity.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 During the last year we have focused on reviewing domestic abuse services and identifying unmet needs. We have commissioned new services to ensure that domestic abuse services are available and accessible throughout the county. We will evaluate these services over the course of the year for effectiveness and value for money and report back to the committee on progress.
- 6.2 We will continue to work in partnership with relevant agencies in order to improve services and meet outcomes in the LAA Safer Communities block. The new strategy and action plan will be developed with partners in order to meet agreed targets and the domestic violence BVPI and in alignment with the new LAA.

William Brown
Strategic Director of Community
Protection and County Fire Officer

August 2007