
Date of Meeting: 23 March 2020

Report Title: Safeguarding Children from Domestic Abuse

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Kathryn Flavell, Portfolio Holder for Children and Families

Senior Officer: Mark Palethorpe, Executive Director of People

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This briefing is a response to a request by Overview and Scrutiny Committee to receive a report on the effectiveness of our arrangements for safeguarding children from domestic abuse in Cheshire East for the purposes of information and scrutiny.
- 1.2. We are ambitious in our desire to offer the best service we can for families where domestic abuse impacts on their lives. The report highlights the scale and impact of the issue, development of statutory and specialist provision provided by the Council and commissioned services, indicates what we know to be working well and outlines priorities for further action.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:
 - a. Note the contents of the contents of the report;
 - b. Scrutinise the achievements of the service delivered against the priorities for the service based on need: and
 - c. Support the ambitions for further development and innovation of the service to provide an effective whole family response to domestic abuse that keeps victims and children safe and recovered from trauma, and offers an opportunity to perpetrators to change their behaviours.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1. Domestic abuse has a damaging effect on children and their families and is a key factor in children and young people requiring children's services intervention at all levels of need, from early help and child protection through to children in care. It is important that services to support these children and families are effective through monitoring and scrutiny arrangements.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. The options for delivery of the service are managed through the commissioning process. Partners inform the priorities for the Cheshire East Domestic Abuse strategy and service users and the options for area of service development come from statistical data, feedback, local practice issues and national legislative changes.

5. Background

- 5.1. When domestic abuse is addressed in a timely and appropriate way, immediate harm is reduced and the life chances of children and young people are enhanced. If domestic abuse is not addressed early, children are hurt physically and psychologically, which creates vulnerability and can result in children becoming involved in risky and harmful relationships in the future.

Cheshire East Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership

- 5.2. Cheshire East Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership exists to co-ordinate strategy and action on these critical issues that cause or increase the vulnerability of our children.
- 5.3. The Partnership is chaired by the Council's Head of Safeguarding Children and Families, with an ambition to:
 - Build the confidence and skills of professionals so that children and young people can have the support to recover delivered by practitioners with whom they have a relationship e.g. family support workers, learning mentors, personal advisers, instead of waiting for a specialist resource.
 - Ensure the language and approach, used by children's services practitioners, effectively addresses domestic abuse, reflects the evidence, is rooted within the assessment of the impact for the child, including the interventions to achieve change, and is trauma informed i.e. recognise the impact of harm and how to effect change

- Improve the understanding and skills of children's workers to apply knowledge of the change cycle to their assessments and set realistic goals and measures for success.
- Develop a more effective multi-agency planning framework to ensure those who harm are held accountable and offered opportunity to change – proactive, persistent and flexible offer of support.
- Promote the resilience with children and young people, including peer support.
- Target children in care/young people who are care leavers to improve their understanding of and capacity to develop healthy relationships.
- Joint commissioning – across 'sectors' within Cheshire East and across sub region - where there are economies of scale, expertise and other benefits to our residents.

5.4. The Partnership has a five tiered strategy to reduce the scale and impact of domestic abuse on children and families, services and communities. The Strategy priorities are:

- Community Enabling
- Workforce Development/Managing expectations
- Improving Systems
- Evidencing effectiveness
- Funding/Commissioning specialist support

Meeting the Needs of Children, young people and families

5.5. Children affected by domestic abuse need:

- To be safe – physically and emotionally
- To know it's ok to talk
- To know domestic abuse is never OK
- To have a safety network and plan
- To process what's happened and recover
- To be helped with their own behaviour if needed
- To have parents who are able to prioritise their needs

5.6. This will mean something different for each child, depending on the length and severity of the abuse and their and their parent's resilience, but it is vital that provision is offered as early as possible and in a way that wraps around families, addressing both the effects and the cause of the abuse. Our first priority is always safety but people also need to recover from and/or to change harmful behaviour. For this reason, we always adopt a whole family approach.

- 5.7. In addition to the core work of supporting and safeguarding parents to be able to focus on children's needs, there have been major advances locally in how we work together with families and services to bring about longer term safety and recovery.
- 5.8. Areas of this work are pioneering, not just regionally but nationally:
- Sharing information/co-ordinating action through siting our 24/7 domestic abuse referral and helpline services (Cheshire East Domestic Abuse Hub) within the Integrated Front Door.
 - Developing eMARAC using Liquid Logic optimisation to improve the speed and quality of information sharing and safety measures for those at highest risk.
 - Committing, as a Council, to continued provision of high risk staff – Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) to support families most severely affected.
 - Commissioning a whole family service from a local provider with a nationally recognised track record for effectiveness and innovation which is rooted in client voice and experiences.
 - Co-locating specialist domestic abuse staff with social workers and police officers.
 - Listening to the voice of service users to co-produce developments and priorities in the service.
 - The presence of specialist staff all Initial Child Protection Conferences where domestic abuse is a significant issue for the family to advise on interventions and be an integral part of whole family safety plans.
 - Recovery and change work for parents and children including parallel and joint work with children and parents on shared concerns, intensive and bespoke support to young parents who plan to stay together and where there is often harmful behaviour by both parties.
 - Implementing Operation Encompass in Schools and Settings (police notification of incidents in households so that appropriate understanding and support can be given to pupils).
 - Providing a wide range of training and tools for other professionals including:
 - 'Do you feel what I feel?' - a way to approach domestic abuse in early years settings
 - Guidance for families and professionals on child/adolescent to parent violence and teen relationship abuse
 - Resources to support practitioners in motivating those who harm to engage in change work, which is informed by in depth analysis of perpetrator typology.

- Working within the sub region and via the Public Service Transformation team to increase intensive outreach and accommodation support for the most complex clients, some of whom continue to have children in their care at least some of the time or aspire to reach this arrangement.
- Most recently police provision of a dedicated domestic abuse team to increase victims safety and confidence through partnership work with Council and commissioned services.

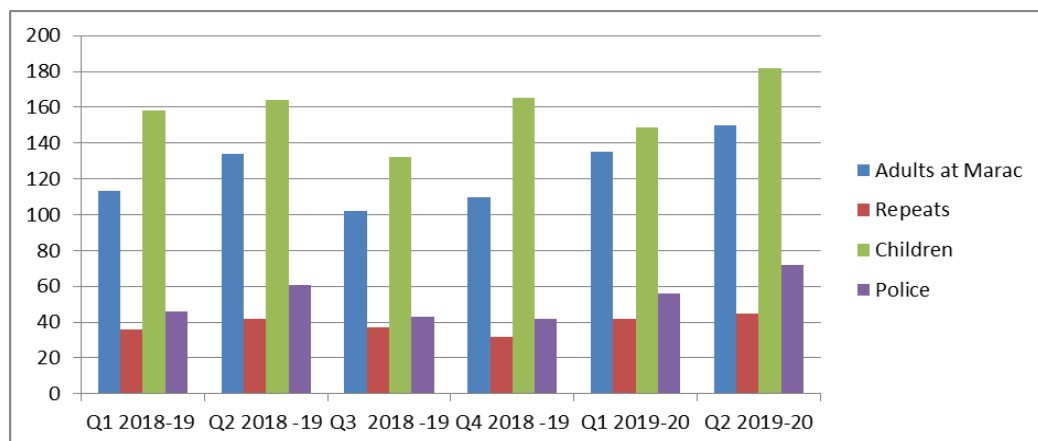
Areas for development

5.9. While we are proud of developments, and are known to be at the cutting edge of progress on addressing domestic abuse, we are also aware of areas where we must do better – together. The following include some of these areas:

- Achieving a shared commitment to a more proactive approach across sectors, where parents are affected by mental ill health & substance misuse in particular.
- Full implementation of the ‘enabling’ element of our strategy, as the volume of referrals exceeds capacity and we would want, within the limitation of the resources, to reach a position where the expertise of the specialist sector can be reserved for the most highest risk or need cases and for the child, that their needs can be met by people already involved in their life who they trust.
- Ensuring good practice is consistent across services and sectors.
- Challenging and/or supporting those who harm to change in sufficient numbers to start to reduce the numbers of children and adults affected.
- Achieving a joint commissioning approach for specialist DA services, the cost of which totals over £1m. Currently the Council contribution is 87% - Health 5%, Police and Crime Commissioner 7%, Cheshire Constabulary 1%, including those presenting with complexity of need.
- Improving our responses to children who come into care as a result domestic abuse and/or related complexities and who are vulnerable to further abuse in their own relationships. There is an opportunity to develop shared resources and provision for cared for children to increase their resilience and expectation of safe and healthy intimate relationships.

Data underpinning the priorities

- 5.10. Data on last's year's performance is included in the annual report (see link below). The following data covers the **first six months** of this financial year and so covers the work of the new myCWA commission.
- 5.11. **Cheshire East Domestic Abuse Hub** - 734 adult victim referrals were made, the majority originating with police, with Children's Services being the second largest referrer. The Hub assesses people's needs and makes onward referrals to Council or commissioned services.
- 5.12. **MARAC/IDVA clients (Council high risk team)** - High risk MARAC clients and their children (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferencing) – the table below shows a 13% rise in referrals following a steady decline over the previous financial year. Police note that some of this increase relates to staff changes in their Referral Unit at the Integrated Front Door. Changes to eMARAC mean that we have robust evidence of responses to children's needs. Some 75% of high risk victims engage with the proactive IDVA offer of support and families are safer as a result.



- 5.13. **My CWA Clients (commissioned service)** - Despite being commissioned as sole provider of adult and children's recovery, accommodation and change specialist services in April 2019, provision has quickly become embedded and is creative, flexible and innovative:
- 552 adults victims were newly in service in the first two quarters and accessing one to one work, where needs are complex, with the majority undertaking group work recovery and peer support.
 - 24 referrals were made for those who harm while 11 men completed L1 or 2 of our Lifeline behaviour change programme.
 - 117 children accessed support with 88% showing positive outcomes.

5.14. The illustrations at Appendix 1 show outcomes for the Quarter 2 cohort

6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1. Legal Implications

6.1.1. None

6.2. Finance Implications

6.2.1. Partnership funding for the Council based IDVA Service (high risk) does not cover the full service cost and has reduced in real terms. The annual shortfall is met and managed by a historic reserve, which through careful management over the last 3 years is likely to be spent by March 2021. There are implications for the future sustainability of this essential and valued service if the Council, which has maintained its financial commitment, is unable to reach agreement with partners about sustaining this work at the end of the next financial year 2020/21.

6.2.2. It is important to note that where people are enabled to be safe and to recover further costs can be prevented and this work contributes to Council goals of securing brighter futures for all its residents. In the last quarter alone (Oct – Dec 2019) 50 victims of domestic abuse have, with support, gained access to training or employment, making a significant difference to the local economy as well as to the self respect of those individuals who are enjoying increasing independence.

6.3. Policy Implications

6.3.1. None

6.4. Equality Implications

6.4.1. There are no equality implications. Services have a proactive outreach policy to sectors of the community from whom referrals are frequently received.

6.5. Human Resources Implications

6.5.1. There are no Human Resource implications currently. There would be such as outlined in the financial section, if insufficient funding was available for the high risk IDVA service

6.6. Risk Management Implications

6.6.1. A Risk Management plan regarding funding for Council based specialist domestic abuse services is in place and reviewed quarterly

6.7. Rural Communities Implications

- 6.7.1. The commissioned provider is using formal and informal community networks as well as digital means to widen access to all support services

6.8. Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

- 6.8.1. Adoption and achievement of the recommendations will improve support services to children and young people affected by domestic abuse

6.9. Public Health Implications

- 6.9.1. There are no direct implications for public health, although of course Domestic abuse is a public health issue.

6.10. Climate Change Implications

- 6.10.1. The Council team follow council recommendations regarding environmental impact and this is a requirement of the Commission also e.g. minimising the requirement to travel by making full use of digital media such as the newly developed eMARAC system

7. Ward Members Affected

- 7.1. Domestic abuse is not confined to any particular ward and resources are deployed in response to need.

8. Consultation & Engagement

- 8.1. Not applicable

9. Access to Information

- 9.1. There are links to supporting information on the Council's LiveWell website within this document
- 9.2. A full copy of the strategy can be found at <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/staying-safe/domestic-abuse-and-sexual-violence/cheshire-east-domestic-abuse-and-sexual-violence-partnership.aspx>
- 9.3. A report on the last full year of Cheshire East Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership Board's work, 2018-19, can be found at <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/staying-safe/domestic-abuse-and-sexual-violence/cheshire-east-domestic-abuse-and-sexual-violence-partnership.aspx>

10. Contact Information

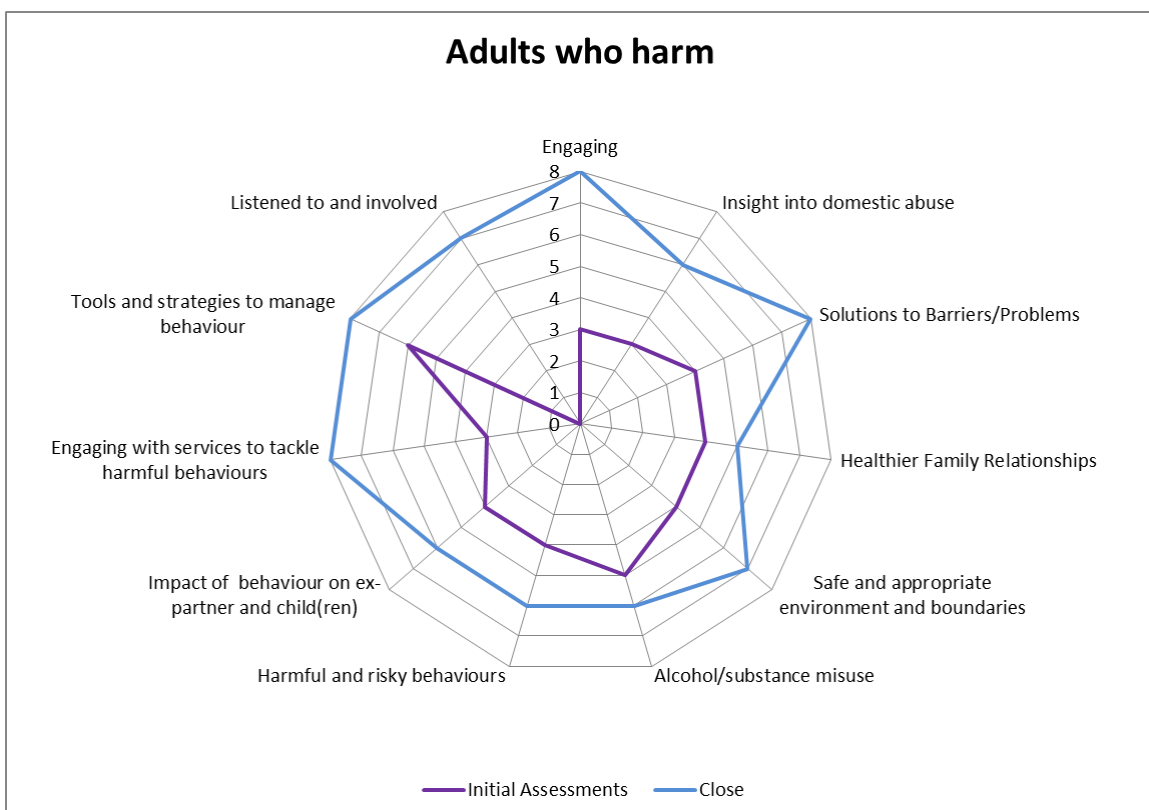
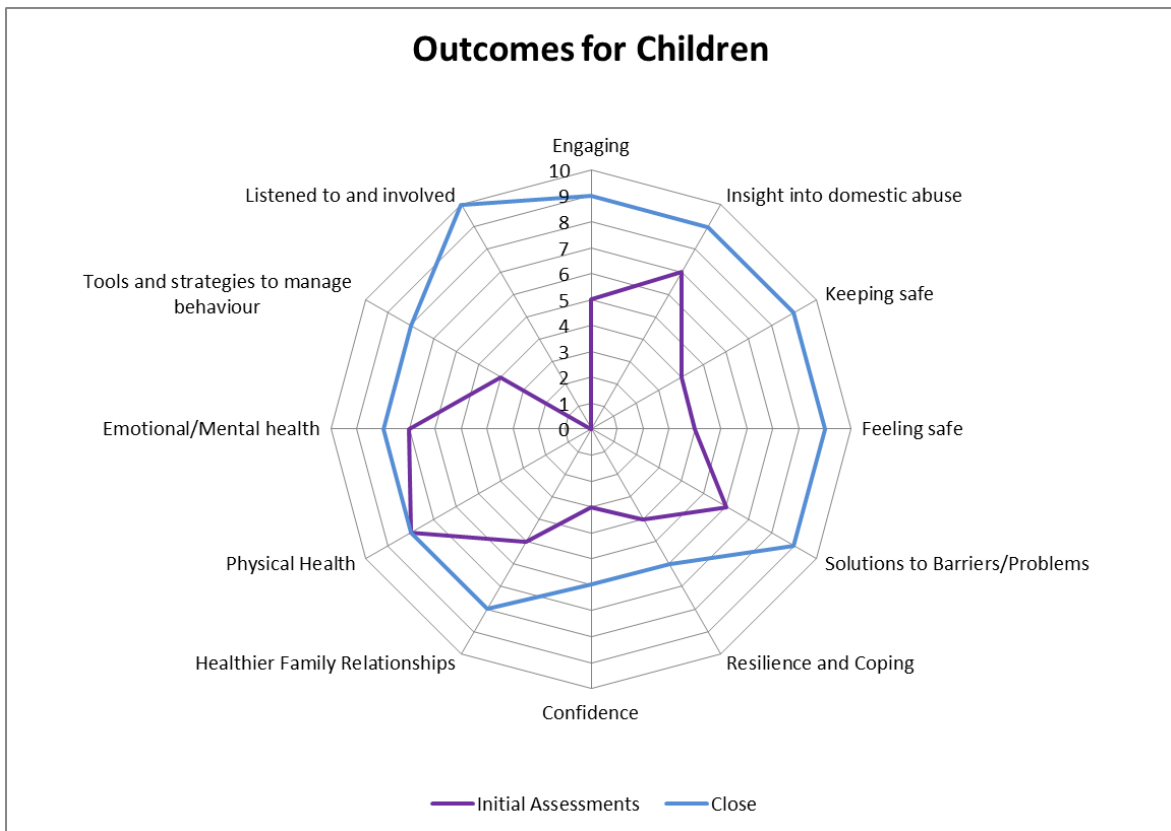
10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

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Email: Judith.gibson@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Quarter 2 Outcomes



Adult Victim Outcomes

