

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL
Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 13 October 2016
Report of: Head of Service Safeguarding Children and families
Subject/Title: Progress Report on Domestic Violence Task & Finish Group Recommendations
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Paul Bates and Councillor Liz Durham

1 Report Summary

1.1 This report provides an update on progress in respect domestic abuse and outlines how Cheshire East Council is addressing the recommendations of the Domestic Violence Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report presented to Cabinet on 3rd May 2016

2 Recommendation

2.1 That this report is presented to Members to note the response to the recommendations of the Domestic Violence Task and Finish Group Report.

3 Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 To update Members on the progress to date against the recommendations of the Domestic Violence Task and Finish group

4 Wards and Local Ward Members Affected

4.1 All Wards.

5 Background and Options

5.1 On 16 June 2015, the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee gave consideration to a report on women's safety, which covered the work of partners in tackling the key priorities in relation to domestic and sexual violence in Cheshire East. It became clear to Members that some areas of joint working required more focus or collaboration. Therefore the Committee resolved to set up a Task and Finish Group to scrutinise in further detail how sexual and domestic violence are dealt with in Cheshire East.

5.2 The original terms of reference for the Task and Finish Group were:

- To gain an understanding of why it was decided not to have a single specialist domestic violence court in Cheshire and how the court process will be improved without this in place.
- To gain an understanding of the sexual violence/abuse police incident reporting process.
- To investigate why domestic abuse reports from Cheshire East residents to the Police are the lowest in Cheshire in a context of extremely low levels of police reporting in Cheshire compared to similar forces nationally
- To review progress on sustaining funding for high risk domestic violence services (Council based)
- To review victims' journey through the system.

Members did not investigate honour based violence, forced marriages or people trafficking. During the Groups investigations, it became apparent that the original scope of the review was too broad, therefore the group decided to target the areas that would have the most impact and focus solely on domestic violence.

5.4 The Group presented their final report and recommendations to Cabinet in May 2016 and the recommendations were accepted.

6.0 Details of progress against the recommendations are detailed below with the Task and Finish Group recommendations included as headings in bold.

Recommendations

1. In order to facilitate longer term planning and retain skilled and experienced staff IDVAs Council funding should be mainstreamed rather than being 12 monthly
2. The deficit in funding for the service (£50K) should be met from the MTFs on a recurrent basis to secure the service at its current level and the Council seeks to continue to influence partners to review their funding arrangements at local or sub regional level*
3. Domestic violence should be a priority for the Council and feature in the soon to be refreshed Community Strategy/Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
4. Due to funding only being secured for the next three years, the low risk domestic violence service be evaluated and consideration be given as to how the service will be funded from 2018.
5. The ambitions relating to the scale of interventions for perpetrators should be funded long term as part of the work on early intervention and prevention. A protocol between the various agencies should be developed to ensure an integrated approach was taken when dealing with perpetrators.

6. That the administration of MARAC be transferred to the Police, which would reduce the cost of the overall service by £20k and strengthen a sub regional approach to high risk work*
7. That the possibility of sharing resources, such as the Polish IDVA, with other authorities be investigated.
8. That the information sharing policy be reviewed to ensure all agencies are fully informed of domestic violence cases and where necessary awareness raised, to ensure that victims receive as much help as possible and are treated with respect and dignity.
9. That MP's and Police and Crime Commissioner be lobbied to provide funding for domestic violence, as it funds mental health and substance abuse.
- 10 That HMCTS be requested to improve the quality of the technology for providing remote evidence giving to such a standard that would allow the establishment of a single specialist court service.
- 11 In the event of IDVAs being commissioned sub regionally, every effort should be made ensure that this is not at the detriment of local service delivery.
- 12 That subject to Operation Encompass and Tandem Project producing the intended outcomes, the availability of resources be considered to sustain the projects.

6.1 Recommendations 1 & 2.

In order to facilitate longer term planning and retain skilled and experienced staff IDVAs Council funding should be mainstreamed rather than being 12 monthly

The deficit in funding for the service (£50K) should be met from the MTFs on a recurrent basis to secure the service at its current level and the Council seeks to continue to influence partners to review their funding arrangements at local or sub regional level

The Council has amalgamated all its departmental funding streams into one core budget for the IDVA service which covers approximately two thirds of the costs.

Other partner contributions cannot be mainstreamed but are agreed on an annual, and so far, recurrent basis. This includes income from the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Constabulary and the two Clinical Commissioning Groups.

The Home Office have made it clear that the £20k which has been an annual contribution for the last five years will cease at the end of this financial year

and that instead bids will be sought for innovative work. We will seek to access this funding to support the work of our Domestic Abuse Hub which provides 24/7 access to help for victims and their families.

6.2 Recommendation 3.

Domestic violence should be a priority for the Council and feature in the soon to be refreshed Community Strategy/Health and Wellbeing Strategy

The Council has made it clear that addressing domestic violence continues to be a priority and has, in addition to employing and funding IDVAs, commissioned a comprehensive service to provide a whole family approach to the issue.

Safer Cheshire East Partnership board (SCEP) has included domestic abuse in the draft of the community strategy.

The Health and Wellbeing strategy was drafted in 2014 and did not place Domestic Abuse as a named priority at that time although the service provision would fit to both outcomes 1 and 2 and it is identified as a key priority for children's services within that document. The strategy is due for review next year and domestic abuse will be considered as an area for priority action.

6.3 Recommendation 4.

Due to funding only being secured for the next three years, the low risk domestic violence service be evaluated and consideration be given as to how the service will be funded from 2018.

The Council's commission for domestic abuse services covering all but high risk IDVA work (i.e. longer term support and recovery work with victims, work with children and young people, with perpetrators as well as refuge provision) was awarded on 1st April 2016.

This work is being monitored and evaluated by representatives from Children's and Adults Services, Public Health and Housing and evidence of effectiveness will influence longer term commissioning

There is also work at sub regional level which has the potential to affect our understanding and implementation of best practice and Cheshire East is represented at all levels of this work including the involvement of the Executive Director – People as a member of the sub regional Strategic Domestic Abuse Board.

6.4 Recommendation 5.

The ambitions relating to the scale of interventions for perpetrators should be funded long term as part of the work on early intervention and prevention. A protocol between the various agencies should be developed to ensure an integrated approach is taken when dealing with perpetrators.

There are currently three key work streams in relation to perpetrators.

- a) A Police initiative to allocate two officers locally as part of a wider 'Integrated Domestic Abuse Team' which focuses on prolific perpetrators who inflict a human cost on victims and financial cost on services. This work is in its early stages but is already co-located with our Domestic Abuse Hub team at the 'Front Door' to services at Sandbach House. This should ensure that the actions of officers are not taken in isolation and can enhance the wider family work taking place.
- b) The 'Engage' project within the new domestic abuse commission which targets perpetrators whose harmful behaviour adversely affects children and families. This group is identified through Children's Social Work teams where it is considered perpetrators may be most motivated to engage in change work and the result of change may be most beneficial. There is liaison between the Engage and IDAT teams to ensure that there is no duplication in the cohorts being worked with.
- c) Ongoing provision of a graded approach to perpetrators who are referred by any third party or by self. This includes support to practitioners who already have a relationship with the perpetrator to ensure they have the confidence and tools to address harm as well as the provision of a group programme for those who are treatment ready. This work is done within the commission and so is co-ordinated with the Engage and IDAT interventions above.

6.5 Recommendation 6.

*That the administration of MARAC be transferred to the Police, which would reduce the cost of the overall service by £20k and strengthen a sub-regional approach to high risk work**

This transfer is now complete. While referrers have not experienced any change to their referral pathway there are some early transition issues with elements of the administrative support that the Police have been able to provide. We are working with the Police to address the risks raised by these issues. In parallel further work is being done to look at a 'daily MARAC' model for the lower risk cases as the complex dependency model at the front door to

children's services develops. This may enable effective demand management for the most at risk adults and their families.

6.6 Recommendation 7.

That the possibility of sharing resources, such as the Polish IDVA, with other authorities be investigated

An approach regarding the sharing of the Polish IDVA was made but no other Boroughs expressed interest in the initiative. However the Sub Regional Strategic Domestic Abuse Board has initiated work-streams which may result in the sharing of resources across Cheshire e.g. shared training, shared performance and outcomes monitoring. At present this will not result in savings but it may be that in the longer term there may be a possibility of sharing costs.

6.7 Recommendation 8.

That the information sharing policy be reviewed to ensure all agencies are fully informed of domestic violence cases and where necessary awareness raised, to ensure that victims receive as much help as possible and are treated with respect and dignity.

The Local Safeguarding Children's Board, the Local Safeguarding Adults Board and the Safer Cheshire East Partnership have recently renewed their joint information sharing policy and all major partners have signed this.

6.8 Recommendation 9.

That MPs and Police and Crime Commissioner be lobbied to provide funding for domestic violence, as it funds mental health and substance abuse.

The new Police and Crime Commissioner has renewed his commitment to tackling domestic abuse and continued to allocate funding from the Victims Services Grant at the same levels.

No direct lobbying of local politicians has yet taken place but it is known that the government expects provision largely to be funded locally.

Most recently a group of co-ordinators and practitioners was invited by the Police and Crime Commissioner to meet with the Ministry of Justice Victims Services domestic abuse lead and we had the opportunity to highlight the importance of IDVA, and particularly hospital IDVA funding. While she was very receptive and impressed by the quality of local provision it is clear that her focus was on learning from us how she can incentivise other areas to reach our standards. We had the opportunity clearly to articulate the

importance of core sustained funding in addition to innovative or enhanced work.

6.9 Recommendation 10.

That HMCTS be requested to improve the quality of the technology for providing remote evidence giving to such a standard that would allow the establishment of a single specialist court service.

The Council manager for domestic abuse and sexual violence continues to be a part of the Local Criminal Justice Board Strategic Group covering court and justice issues. This is led by the CPS chief prosecutor for domestic abuse and includes HMCTS representatives. There have been major changes to court provision with victims in the north of the Borough now attending Stockport Magistrates Court while Crown Court remains in Chester. The whole group continues to advocate for a single court but it is clear that we are subject to the roll out of national measures for improving victim experience.

One heartening development in this respect is the decision to implement a 'Section 28' Pilot which CPS in Merseyside have been trialling whereby particularly vulnerable victims can deposit their evidence by video link well ahead of any trial and are not then required to attend court at all. This would be an excellent resolution of the concerns we have been highlighting.

6.10 Recommendation 11.

In the event of IDVAs being commissioned sub regionally, every effort should be made ensure that this is not at the detriment of local service delivery.

This has not yet been muted and we have strong representation at sub regional level including the Executive Director - People and the Head of Safeguarding Children and Families who will always seek to ensure that services to local people remain of the highest quality.

6.11 Recommendation 12.

That subject to Operation Encompass and Tandem Project producing the intended outcomes, the availability of resources be considered to sustain the projects.

The impact of Operation Encompass is being evaluated. It is known to be valued by the Schools which implement it and has been funded through the sub regional Complex Dependence funding stream. There will need to be discussions as to sustaining this provision once this funding stream ceases.

The Tandem Project is provided through the Domestic Abuse Commission and is not separately funded. It is monitored through the Council's monitoring

group outlined at 6.3 and learning from provision will be captured and used to influence future commissioning.

7.0 Contact Information

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