



To: Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

Date: 18th April 2018

Title: Domestic Abuse Strategy 2018-2023

1 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the draft domestic abuse strategy; and to request approval and comments from the Committee.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee are recommended to:
- 1) Endorse the Coventry Domestic Abuse Strategy 2018-2023.
 - 2) Provide further comment or suggestions for the priorities of the strategy to the Chair of the Coventry Community Safety Partnership Board.

3 Information/Background

- 3.1 Domestic abuse has been identified as a priority for Coventry. Between April 2016 and July 2017 2763 domestic abuse crimes were reported in Coventry to West Midlands Police; a further 4287 non-crime incidents were reported over the same period. Data from the West Midlands Police Strategic Intelligence Development Team show that there were 55 honour based violence and forced marriage offences in Coventry in 2014 which represents 9% of all such offences across the West Midlands. In 2010 the West Midlands was ranked as the 2nd worst area behind London for honour based violence with 378 incidents reported to the police.
- 3.2 The annual cost of domestic abuse in Coventry is estimated to be £34.8 million. This includes physical and mental health costs of £10.4m; social services costs of £1.7m; combined criminal justice and civil legal costs of £9.9m; housing and refuge costs of £1.2m; and £11.6m through lost economic output. Human and emotional costs are estimated at £60m.
- 3.3 The Coventry Domestic Abuse Strategy 2018-2023 has been drafted by a multiagency working group. It is anticipated that the strategy and a wider needs analysis will inform recommissioning of the domestic abuse services. An action plan will support the implementation of the strategy.

4 Domestic Abuse Strategy

4.1 Scope

- 4.2 The strategy covers domestic abuse, including honour based violence and forced marriage which are both defined as forms of domestic violence and abuse under the cross-governmental definition.

- 4.3 The strategy acknowledges that whilst in general women predominantly experience domestic abuse, there are other characteristics that can create barriers to accessing help and support. The following groups are identified as falling within these categories:
- Children
 - Older people
 - Adults with care and support needs, including disabled people
 - Men
 - Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
 - Black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugees
 - People with mental illness and/or substance misuse problems
- 4.4 The strategy will run from 2018 to 2023.
- 4.5 **Consultation**
- 4.6 The strategy has been informed by engagement with a wide number of stakeholders including service users, young people, adults with care and support needs, domestic abuse service providers, other voluntary and community sector providers, West Midlands Police, community safety, health and social care, Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group and education.
- 4.7 A co-design event was held with professional stakeholders to discuss the priorities of the strategy, identify any gaps and suggest how the strategy could address them. Some of the key issues raised include:
- Coercive control should be a central part of the strategy.
 - A tiered core competency framework should be developed to ensure that frontline staff can identify and respond appropriately to domestic abuse.
 - Information sharing between agencies requires clear protocols.
 - Acknowledgement of young people as both perpetrators and victims of domestic abuse in the strategy.
 - Whether a domestic abuse strategy, and not a violence against women and girls strategy, is the right approach.
 - Acknowledgement of sexual violence as an aspect of domestic abuse in the strategy.
 - What does and doesn't work well with the current single point of access service model and whether it meets the needs of men.
 - Consideration of the support available to individuals pursuing civil litigation which is currently means tested.
 - That a full needs assessment should have been carried out before work on the strategy was started.
- 4.8 Service users and statutory and voluntary sector stakeholders were invited to complete surveys to identify the priorities that were most important to them.
- 4.9 Targeted engagement took place with young people aged 15-18, through the Positive Youth Foundation by convening a focus group; and adults with care and support needs were surveyed through Grapevine. This focused on exploring what individuals in these groups understood about domestic abuse and their attitudes towards seeking help. Guidance from the Alzheimer's Society was also sought in relation to domestic abuse and dementia and they highlighted the complex problems that can arise for those responsible for their care with regards to domestic abuse.

4.10 The strategy has also been discussed at the Local Safeguarding Children Board business management group, the Coventry Safeguarding Adults Board business executive meeting, the Chairs of Strategic Boards and the Coventry Community Safety Partnership Board.

4.11 **Priorities**

4.12 The following priorities have been proposed to be taken forward through the domestic abuse strategy. These have been developed using local data; national policy, strategy and guidance; and consultation with partners.

4.13 The priority areas of the strategy have been developed using the government's Contest model:

- Prepare
- Prevent
- Protect
- Pursue

5 Prepare

5.1 The development of a strong governance and service commissioning structure to provide high quality, equitable services that are shaped around the needs of victims and ensure that their voices are heard and responded to.

5.2 Outcomes

- Statutory organisations and specialist services will provide safe and effective support that is responsive to the needs of victims and allows their story to be heard. Services will work closely in partnership to ensure that victims do not have to tell their story more than once. Services will be underpinned by robust, visible governance structures to ensure clear management, accountability and responsibility, including during periods of change and uncertainty.
- Improved data collection by local and regional services in contact with victims and perpetrators to ensure that service provision is shaped by the needs of victims and is able to identify and respond to emerging trends. This should include identifying vulnerable and underrepresented groups to help address barriers to service access.
- Services will support victims at all levels of risk. This should include those with complex needs to ensure that factors that may impact on the victim's vulnerability to and effect of domestic abuse are addressed.

5.3 How we will achieve the outcomes

- Through robust commissioning, governance and provider accountability we will ensure the development of domestic abuse services adherent to the West Midlands Domestic Violence and Abuse Standards. The commissioning process will be informed by engagement with victims so that services reflect their needs. Commissioners and service providers will work together to develop tools to facilitate accurate data collection.
- We will explore options for carrying out a service evaluation to inform future service development.
- We will explore the development of referral pathways between service providers and key services, where they do not already exist, to support victims and perpetrators to access additional services.
- As part of our commissioning strategy we will consider cross-boundary commissioning of specialist services where local need may not justify a local service.

6 Prevent

6.1 A long term approach to improve awareness, understanding and early identification of abuse at all levels of society. Victims will be empowered to report and staff will be given the skills and confidence to support them. Interventions tailored to victims at all levels of risk with a range of needs will help to break the intergenerational cycle of abuse and minimise repeat victimisation.

6.2 Outcomes

- Frontline staff will consider the needs of the whole family when addressing domestic abuse; and families will be supported by early intervention initiatives in Coventry such as the Early Intervention Service, the Family Nurse Partnership and Family Hubs, which can help to break the intergenerational cycle of abuse.
- Frontline staff will be able to identify possible signs of victimisation, including evidence of controlling and coercive behaviour and seemingly isolated incidents as part of a pattern of abuse; and intervene early enough through signposting, referral and/or information-giving as appropriate to prevent repeat victimisation.
- Frontline staff will be able to identify suspected perpetrators and know where to seek further information and advice to ensure that they receive appropriate support to change their behaviour and improve outcomes for victims.
- Improved public understanding (including among vulnerable groups) of domestic abuse (including coercive and controlling behaviour, honour-based violence and forced marriage), who it affects, and the needs of vulnerable groups to enable individuals to recognise when they or others may be a victim.
- Children and young people will have improved understanding of domestic abuse, including honour-based violence and forced marriage, recognising that they have no place in healthy intimate or family relationships.
- Victims will have the confidence to report abuse early and seek help to prevent further incidents.
- Parents will be able to recognise the signs that their child may be a victim or perpetrator of domestic abuse and know where to seek help to ensure that they receive the necessary support to prevent further abuse and/or achieve behaviour change.
- Attitudes towards honour-based violence and forced marriage are changed to increase understanding that they have no cultural or religious justification, and encourage victims and potential victims to seek help.

6.3 How we will achieve the outcomes

- We will develop a tiered core competency framework outlining the minimum knowledge and skills requirements for staff in contact with adults and children affected by domestic abuse, to support a holistic, needs-led approach that enables their complex needs to be addressed; and ensure the dissemination of information to local services about domestic abuse services in Coventry.
- Coventry's Early Intervention Service will review school lesson plans, and ensure relationship education is included where necessary. We will engage with voluntary and community sector organisations that work with children and young people, schools, colleges and universities, to increase knowledge and understanding of domestic abuse including honour-based violence and forced marriage among children and young people; and explore the possibility of peer-led education delivered by individuals with lived experience of these crimes.

- Coventry's Early Intervention Service will deliver education to parents and carers to support them to identify unhealthy relationships between young people. We will explore other methods of improving parental education on domestic abuse including honour-based violence and forced marriage to support them to recognise where their own children may be affected.
- We will explore methods of engagement with faith and cultural leaders to challenge the beliefs that give rise to forced marriage and honour-based violence; and with voluntary, community and faith organisations that support vulnerable groups who face barriers to accessing services.
- We will support the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce's initiative to improve employer awareness of and support for victims of domestic abuse.
- We will develop a communications strategy to improve awareness and understanding of, and encourage conversations around domestic abuse including honour-based violence and forced marriage among all groups in society. The strategy will challenge misconceptions, increase understanding of abusive behaviour, including coercive and controlling behaviour, and highlight the needs of vulnerable groups.

7 Protect

7.1 There will be effective information sharing and referral pathways between key agencies, breaking down organisational and cultural barriers to ensure victims of abuse are identified and protected. The safety of victims, and that of their children (where relevant), will be paramount. Victims will be supported to access safe and appropriate accommodation; and safeguarding procedures will be robustly implemented to ensure that children and vulnerable adults are protected, and that the voice of the child is always heard.

7.2 Outcomes

- Individuals within key agencies will be able to identify the circumstances in which it is appropriate to share data; and know who to seek advice from when in doubt to ensure that victim's needs are not overlooked.
- Victims of domestic abuse will have 24 hour support to access emergency accommodation appropriate for their needs and circumstances, including for those not resident in Coventry. Provision of emergency accommodation for the identified vulnerable groups will be driven by need, based on local data.
- Victims ready to transition from refuges to settled accommodation will be treated as high priority for social housing; and those who wish to remain in their own homes will be supported to do so.
- Increased public awareness and knowledge, including among young people and adults with care and support needs, about the national and local domestic abuse services available and how to contact them.
- Professionals supporting victims will ensure the implementation of the appropriate safeguarding procedures for adults and children; and ensure the child's story is heard.

7.3 How we will achieve the outcomes

- We will develop a data sharing protocol and tool (or appropriately adapt existing ones) within and between relevant agencies to support decision-making on how and when data should be shared. Commissioned domestic abuse services will be required to have a named information governance lead who can advise on information-sharing.

- Domestic abuse services, housing and other key agencies will work in partnership to ensure that victims of domestic abuse have access to appropriate housing. We will explore options to assess the demand for emergency accommodation so that service provision is informed by need.
- We will ensure that domestic abuse services support the prevention and relief of homelessness and align with the Housing Options services put in place to meet the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act, including advice and support for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, alongside effective referral pathways.
- A communications strategy will be developed to improve public awareness, including among young people, of local and national domestic abuse services and knowledge of how to seek help. This will include the identification of appropriate communication channels and settings (e.g. youth centres, workplaces, cultural centres) to ensure that vulnerable groups are reached.
- Locally commissioned domestic abuse services will be required to maintain an up-to-date website and publicity material with contact details of local and national services which will be accessible to those who do not speak English as a first language or who may require easy-read materials.
- We will explore the provision of peer-led support for young people who experience or witness domestic abuse including honour based violence or forced marriage.
- Development of clear safeguarding policies for adults and children by agencies supporting victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse; and a named contact within agencies to advise and support staff to ensure appropriate implementation.
- Close partnership working between key agencies to ensure that children's needs are addressed in all cases.

8 Pursue

8.1 An approach centred on achieving justice and positive outcomes for victims, including reductions in offending. There will be better understanding of perpetrator risk to support the use of court and out of court disposals so that they are held accountable for their actions and appropriately supported to understand and change their offending behaviour.

8.2 Outcomes

- Perpetrators will receive appropriate support to understand and change their behaviour, and address the complex needs that may contribute to their actions, with the aim of achieving positive outcomes for the victim including reductions in offending behaviour
- Professionals in contact with perpetrators will have an understanding of and be able to recognise coercive and controlling behaviour.
- Perpetrators will be managed robustly but sensitively to achieve justice for victims and ensure that they feel supported and able to continue reporting incidents.

8.3 How we will achieve the outcomes

- We will work to better understand the needs of perpetrators and the pathways in place to support them; and consider actions alongside criminal justice (e.g. removals to prevent breach of the peace, domestic violence protection notices and orders, and civil orders) to manage them where this is appropriate.

- We will develop effective referral pathways and information sharing agreements to support them, working effectively with the police and probation service to understand how the wider partnership can support criminal justice activity.
- We will explore options for the evaluation of the effectiveness of services that are in contact with perpetrators, victims and families to determine the outcomes of services and inform commissioning.

9 Governance of the strategy

9.1 Membership of the domestic abuse working group comprises the following agencies:

- West Midlands Police
- Community safety
- Public health and Insight
- Commissioning (adults and children)
- Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group (safeguarding)
- Children's social care
- Regulatory services
- Probation (West Midlands and Staffordshire Community Rehabilitation Company)
- The Office of the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner

9.2 The group is jointly chaired by Liz Gaulton, Acting Director of Public Health, and Craig Hickin, Head of Environmental Services.

9.3 Following completion of the strategy it is recommended that the working group becomes a steering group to support the recommissioning of domestic abuse services in 2018; and implement the strategy's action plan. Implementation of the action plan will be supported by further consultation and engagement with key stakeholders including identified vulnerable groups, service users, the Domestic Violence Operations Group, the Coventry Safeguarding Adults Board, the Local Safeguarding Children Board and this board. It is anticipated that the strategy and action plan will also be considered by Council Scrutiny.

10 Next steps

10.1 The final draft strategy has been taken, or will be taken to the following Boards for approval and sign off:

- Coventry Community Safety Partnership Board
- Health and Wellbeing Board
- Local Safeguarding Children Board
- Coventry Safeguarding Adults Board
- Implementation Group
- Children's Improvement Board

10.2 The strategy is expected to be launched in May.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Coventry Domestic Abuse Strategy 2018-2023