

TRAFFIC, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL

MINUTES OF A MEETING of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel held on Tuesday 16 July at 5pm in Conference Room B, 2nd Floor, The Civic Offices, Portsmouth.

(NB These minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting which can be found at www.portsmouth.gov.uk).

Present

Councillor Caroline Scott (Chair)
Les Stevens
Sandra Stockdale
Phil Smith
Ken Ellcome

Officers

Bruce Marr, Hidden Violence & Young People Service Manager

9 Apologies for Absence (AI 1).

Councillor Robert New sent his apologies.

10 Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2).

No interests were declared.

11 Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 May 2013 (AI 3).

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 14 May 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

12 Review of Domestic Abuse (AI 5).

RESOLVED that the scoping document be agreed subject to the amended title to read: assessment of the progress made following Portsmouth's review of domestic abuse.

Bruce Marr, Hidden Violence & Young People Service Manager presented the domestic abuse commissioning strategy for Portsmouth and in response to questions from the panel clarified the following points:

Following the review, the service underwent restructuring and the number of Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVA) was reduced from 6.5 to 4 and Advocacy and Support (A&S) workers increasing from 1.8 to 5. However, thanks to health funding the number of A&S was increased to 8. There was a shortfall of 0.5 IDVA however the Safer Portsmouth Partnership is funding this until march 14.

Strategic Directors agreed that supporting victims of domestic abuse is a

priority and identified leads to receive training on detecting, assessing and supporting survivors of domestic abuse. In addition to the one day training session, on-going support is provided. Thirty domestic abuse practitioners across partner agencies (including adult and children providers and the voluntary sector) have been identified. The outcome of this training is monitored.

Domestic Violence Protection Orders enable police to apply to the Magistrates Court to set conditions on bail to people arrested for domestic abuse. The DVPOs were piloted in four local authorities including Manchester who have continued to use these. The results are currently being evaluated by the Home Office.

Another pilot is Clare's Law enables women in new relationships to make enquiries into the history of their partners.

Coordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA) is a national voluntary organisation that supports a multi-agency response to domestic abuse by providing practical assistance to support professionals and organisations. They have awarded the Early Intervention Project (PCC's specialist DA service) Leading Lights status in recognition of the high standard of service provided.

The aim of the coordinated community response to domestic abuse is that services empower the public to identify the signs early and to make best decision for them to reduce the likelihood of experiencing domestic abuse.

The Home Office recently published a new definition of domestic abuse to cover:

'Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality'

The significant difference in this definition is in relation to the lowering of the age and coercive controlling behaviour. The definition, which is not a legal definition, includes so called "honour" based violence (HBV), female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

A report that was recently considered by the Cabinet Member for Environment & Community Safety will be sent to the panel.

There is debate about the appropriate term to use when referring to service users who are experiencing domestic abuse. The terms survivor and victim are interchangeable.

It is essential that all service providers understand their responsibility for detecting, assessing and supporting people experiencing domestic abuse.

In Portsmouth 66% of children who have a child protection plan have experienced domestic abuse and research carried out by the Department of Health revealed that 750,000 children a year witness domestic abuse.

Identification and Referral to Improve Safety (IRIS) is a general practice-based domestic violence and abuse training support and referral programme. As domestic abuse often starts or escalates during pregnancy, midwives are trained to ask key questions to identify cases.

Traditionally GPs diagnose problems and then treat them. Underlying causes of depression or broken limbs may not be explored. Section 115 of the Crime and Disorder Act requires GPs and other professionals to break patient/doctor confidentiality in order to prevent a crime. Guidance is issued to GPs on this issue. Three training sessions are provided for all staff in the surgery. The IRIS steering group's aim is to provide this to 14 of the 26 surgeries in Portsmouth this year.

From April 2011 it became a statutory requirement to undertake Domestic Homicide reviews when someone killed as a result of domestic abuse. This doesn't include if someone commits suicide as a result of Domestic Abuse.

The domestic abuse service responds to concerns from the Black, Minority and Ethnic groups.

The meeting concluded at 5.55pm.