

Title of meeting: Health and Wellbeing Board

Date of meeting: 27th November 2019

Subject Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategic Review 2019 - 2023

Report by: Lisa Wills, Strategy and Partnership Manager
Bruce Marr, Head Harm and Exploitation

Wards affected: All

Key decision: Yes

Full council decision: No

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 Seeks approval for the updated Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy 2019-23.

2 Recommendations

The Health and Wellbeing Board:

- 2.1 Approves the updated three year Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy (see appendix A to this report) and agrees to review and refresh the action plan annually
- 2.2 Partners consider whether the investment locally in responding to domestic abuse is sufficient (see page 8, and appendix A to the strategy document)
- 2.3 Monitoring of the action plan is delegated to the Domestic Abuse Steering Group (see appendix C for membership).

3 Background

- 3.1 Discussions at the Safer Portsmouth Partnership on 13th December 2018 and again at the Domestic Abuse Steering Group on 14th January 2019 recommended a review of services and resources in relation to domestic abuse would be helpful and timely. The current strategy was updated in 2017 and prior to this 2012.
- 3.2 It was subsequently agreed in discussion with Children's Services Directorate Management¹ Team that a swift, light touch review of services across the city

¹ Feb 11th 2019

was the preferred option with an initial deadline of end of May 2019². However, as work progressed, and partners have engaged with the process, the need to deepen and broaden the scope of the review became clear. The original scope was extended to enable a complete refresh the strategy approved in 2017.

4. Methodology

Using a tried and tested structure, the strategy was developed between January and October 2019 with the full range of partners engaged and involved. The process included three multi-agency workshops, data analysis, service user interviews, survey in schools and also draws on local and national research. The draft strategy and delivery plan attached as appendix A, was reviewed by the Domestic Abuse Steering group on 7th August and on 23rd October by Children, Families and Education Directorate Management Team.

4.1 The strategy aims to ensure that:

- Everyone in the city - especially young people - understand what a healthy relationship looks like
- Everyone in the city knows where to get the right support for their needs
- That professionals understand both the presenting and underlying needs of adults and families struggling with unhealthy or abusive relationships
- That there is a clear measurable, process to access the right support and that support is provided for as long as required in order to keep adults, children and families safe
- That those who use coercive control, unhealthy or abusive behaviour are held to account and supported to change insofar as this is possible.

4.2 There are five priorities for improvement:

- A. Promote healthy relationships
- B. Improve identification and assessment
- C. Challenge and support those who use abusive or unhealthy behaviours
- D. Hold to account those who use coercive control and violence
- E. Improve performance monitoring, quality assurance and workforce development

5. Key issues

- 5.1 **Data and understanding demand:** Given the nature of domestic abuse and associated under-reporting to police and other responsible authorities, it is difficult to assess the level and patterns of need in the city. Despite regular detailed analysis and monitoring of relevant data sets, there are still significant gaps in our shared understanding about the impact of services and the experience of services users.

² Interviews with service users, evaluation of "Is This Love" campaign in schools, pathway analysis and resource/service mapping.

- 5.2 ***Gathering the views of service users:*** this proved particularly difficult for a number of reasons, including concerns about the voice of the child and possible re-traumatisation of victims. Interviews with 13 service users from across our specialist services were undertaken and analysis of this data will be helpful in developing a more sustainable approach to understanding if services are making a difference to clients.
- 5.3 ***Inconsistent funding:*** analysis of current funding found a high proportion is short term and insecure. There are currently 21 grant funded or commissioned services (see appendix 1 to revised strategy document). 67% of this funding ends in March 2020, 24% in March 2021. Given the financial impact of domestic abuse on public services and the current financial pressures, this situation needs urgent attention.
- 5.4 ***Changing the language of domestic abuse:*** in recognising the complex dynamics of domestic abuse we need to develop a new language for those who use unhealthy behaviours, violence and coercive control. It is also important to understand, that in the context of domestic abuse, 'families' don't always include children.
- 5.5 ***Referrals from health services:*** referrals from a range of health services, particularly from GPs, have fallen and require local scrutiny and focus. In 2014/15, 112 referrals were received from GPs. In December 2017 a paper was brought to the Safer Portsmouth Partnership (see Appendix B) raising the decline in referrals as an issue arising from. However in the past year (2018/19) only 10 referrals were received.
- 5.6 ***Understanding need - assessment, decision making and multi-agency working:*** it became clear early in the process that current risk assessment processes did not provide enough information about underlying needs for effective support planning to take place. Police processes have changed recently and this will have an impact on the capacity of specialist services and multi-agency working including the Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) process.
- 5.8 ***Prevention:*** There was insufficient time to explore the prevention agenda in detail so there is more work to do in this area. Portsmouth's awareness raising campaign 'Is this Love?' will be delivered by the council's corporate communications team going forward. Resources have been identified to continue the campaign for the next 12 months.

6. **Equality Impact Assessment** - attached

7. **City Solicitor Comment**

The legal position is outlined within the body of the report and more accurately fully supported within the attached appendices. The report reflects the Domestic Violence Bill 2019 which whilst not enacted is the future primary legislation likely to be dealt with by the next Parliament. Additionally the appendices show

that the author(s) of the report has taken reasonable and proportionate steps to engage with a wide range of relevant organisations, service providers and service users to formulate a balanced and supported analysis of the key data.

8. Finance Comments

The 2019/20 Portsmouth City Council budget totals £797,800 (37% of the total cost of Domestic Abuse prevention) any request to increase further the Councils financial commitment to Domestic Abuse prevention recommended by the Board would require approval by the Cabinet of the City Council including the identification of an appropriate funding source