

## **TRAFFIC, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL**

MINUTES OF A MEETING of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel held on Tuesday 26 November at 4pm in the Guildhall.

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

### **Present**

Councillor Sandra Stockdale (in the Chair)  
Phil Smith  
Les Stevens

### Witnesses

Bryan Stephenson, Safeguarding Lead, Adult Social Care  
Teresa O'Toole, Senior Housing Options Manager and Chair of the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference Steering Group  
Shonagh Dillon, Chief Executive Officer, Aurora New Dawn Ltd  
Nigel Selley, Housing Manger, Housing and Property Services

### Officers

Bruce Marr, Hidden Violence & Young People Service Manager

### **21 Apologies for Absence (AI 1).**

Councillors Caroline Scott and Ken Ellcome sent their apologies.

### **22 Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2).**

Councillor Young declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest: he works for the probation service.

### **23 Review of Domestic Abuse (AI 4).**

Shonagh Dillon gave an overview of the work Aurora New Dawn Ltd carries out including providing a domestic abuse and sexual violence service for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, leading local campaigns and being involved in national campaigns.

#### In response to questions, the following points were clarified:

- Funding is received from the Ministry of Justice, the Home Office and the Health & Social Care Volunteering Fund. However, the funding from the Ministry of Justice will now come from the Hampshire Police and Crime Commissioner. The amount received will depend on the priority allocated to domestic abuse and sexual violence.
- Aurora was launched in 2011 and so was not involved in the commissioning review.
- Support is provided to both women and men.
- Police refer cases to Aurora, particularly during out of hours.
- Aurora provides a stalking advocate for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and a court advocacy post. Cuts to legal aid have led to a 76% increase

in referrals.

- Aurora is very active on Twitter and Facebook.
- Campaigns include Reclaim the Night. Work is currently underway with Hampshire Constabulary on a campaign to raise awareness of domestic abuse this Christmas.
- Compared to other areas, Portsmouth has high levels of people disclosing and accessing services. The issue to be considered now is managing capacity.
- In its first year, Aurora received 600 referrals. It now receives 7-8 calls per night.
- The service may be expanded in East Hampshire.
- The Identification and Referral to Improve Safety (IRIS) programme is provided in-house in Portsmouth. However, research has indicated that better outcomes are achieved if it is provided by the third sector. Only one other local authority provides this service in-house. It is important to monitor the effectiveness of the programme.
- The Southampton IRIS is provided by Aurora and has received 118 referrals to date with 26 out of the 34 surgeries booked onto complete the IRIS training.

Bryan Stephenson explained that he has overarching responsibility for safeguarding for adults in the city:

In response to questions from members, the following points were clarified:

- He manages a team of 5 social workers who are trained in Independent Domestic Abuse Advocacy (IDVA). Each worker has received specialist training in different aspects of the work e.g. interviewing vulnerable witnesses.
- The team receives referrals for complex cases where vulnerability is an issue e.g. it involves a person who may be elderly, have learning difficulties, mental health issues or substance misuse.
- When a vulnerable person is identified by the police this information is passed onto Adult Services as a CA12 notification. These are screened by the safeguarding team to determine whether support is required.
- The team works closely with the Early Intervention Programme and Aurora.
- Approximately 6-9% of referrals include domestic abuse and for 3-4% it is not clear if it is involved. In the latter cases, if there is another referral it will be looked at more closely.
- Alerts about care homes can be received from relatives, members of staff or the Care Quality Commission. When these are received, the safeguarding team will assess the risk within 24 hours by making an unannounced visit, with health colleagues if appropriate, to review the care plan/s and talk to the owner, staff, clients and relatives.
- Immediate can be taken if required, including removal of the client to a place of safety and the taking on of additional staff.
- The action plan can be monitored over several visits to ensure that changes are implemented.
- The team also has the authority to enter hospitals to investigate safeguarding issues.

- It is essential that the client's human rights are respected, which means that if they have capacity, they have the right to make their own decisions about their life.

Teresa O'Toole explained that she works for the Housing Options Service which supports people with a range of housing requirements. She is also the Chair of the MARAC Steering Group.

In response to questions from members, the following points were clarified:

- An alternative place of safety can be offered to victims of domestic abuse, if required.
- Many clients are at high risk of violence from an ex-partner issue, so outreach and IDVA services are very important.
- The MARAC meets fortnightly to set action plans for families experiencing domestic abuse and who are at high risk of violence. The aim is to reduce the risk and increase their wellbeing.
- If another crime is reported, the MARAC considers what more can be done to support the family.
- The steering group monitors the effectiveness of MARAC and resolves any obstacles that have been identified.
- Programmes to help increase confidence are available to domestic abuse victims.
- Target hardening support people to stay in their homes. Options include locks, securing letterboxes, alarms.
- The police have the numbers for the refuge and other support services.

Nigel Selley explained that his service manages 1,500 council tenancies, six adventure playgrounds and three youth centres.

In response to questions from members, the following points were clarified:

- The council's domestic abuse policy is fully integrated into the housing service.
- The service is victim-centred.
- It works closely with EIP and MARAC.
- All staff attend training courses to ensure that they understand the council's domestic abuse policy and know how to make referrals in a non-judgemental and confidential manner. Disclosures are accepted at face value and no pressure is put on clients to make decisions.
- The emergency rehousing service is available 24/7.
- Domestic abuse victims are offered a place of safety and priority housing if they wish to move. They are also given advice regarding tenancy issues, safety plans, support agencies and risk assessments.
- The 52 Housing Officers will shortly manage smaller patches so that they are empowered to take more action if required.
- On average there are approximately two domestic abuse cases per month.
- Normally if someone makes themselves intentionally homeless, the council does not have a statutory duty to rehouse them. However, in cases of domestic abuse, the council will take appropriate action to

support the victim.

- The Christmas edition of the council's magazine, Housetalk that is sent to tenants will include safety advice and contact telephone numbers of appropriate support agencies.

In response to questions from members, Bruce Marr clarified the following points:

- It is a challenge to support people who want to stay in the relationship.
- If a domestic abuse victim declines offers of support, the police will write to them to remind them of the support available, but will not take any other follow-up action. Other agencies will remain in contact.
- The Safer Portsmouth Partnership has requested data from the third sector regarding domestic abuse in order to gauge the level of need for support services. At present, most of the data comes from the police and referrals to the EIP. It is believed that the current figures are an underestimate. Having an accurate idea of service demand, will benefit the voluntary agencies when bidding for funding.
- 66% of police call outs to incidents involving domestic abuse do not lead to any charges being brought. 33% lead to conviction.
- The number of beds at the refuge has been reduced from 22 to 16. To compensate 70 hours of outreach services are provided.
- The refuge has three properties. It is important that the location of the refuges is kept secret.
- A significant number of people who use it may be from outside the city. It is thanks to the voluntary service including Aurora that the city has a 24 hour service.
- The voluntary sector brings money into the city.
- The Portsmouth IRIS service is funded by the Safer Portsmouth Partnership and the Clinical Commissioning Group. The SPP funds the Clinical Leads who advise the GPs and the CCG funds the Advocate Educator. When the service was commissioned the health element was already being provided as part of an ongoing commitment, therefore the service was not offered out to tender. Seventeen local authorities provide the IRIS service in-house.

The meeting closed at 5.05pm.