

TRAFFIC, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL

MINUTES OF A MEETING of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel held on Tuesday 5 November at 4pm in Conference Room A, 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 Sandra Stockdale (in the Chair)

Margaret Foster
Robert New
Les Stevens
Neill Young

Witnesses

David Elkins, Safeguarding Inspector, Eastern Area Havant Police Station.
Clayton Coombs, Commissioning Manager, Portsmouth and Isle of Wight Local Delivery Unit, Hampshire Probation Service
Dr Elizabeth Fellowes, Clinical Executive, Portsmouth Clinical Commissioning Group (from 5pm)

Officers

Bruce Marr, Hidden Violence & Young People Service Manager

17 Apologies for Absence (AI 1).

Councillors Caroline Scott, Phil Smith and Ken Ellcome sent their apologies.

18 Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2).

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

19 Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 September 2013 (AI 3).

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 17 September 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

20 Review of Domestic Abuse (AI 4).

Clayton Coombs gave an overview of how the probation service supports domestic abuse perpetrators:

- He attends the domestic abuse review group which is led by Bruce Marr.
- There are a number of programmes available: the Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP) which will cease shortly; the Building Better Relationships course started on 1 July and has been well received and the Integrated Domestic Abuse Module which is a 1:1 session with a probation officer if group sessions are not appropriate. Since it started in

April, 19 offenders have completed the course in Portsmouth and 65 across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

- His team is also involved in writing court reports for Children and Family Court Advisory Service if there is a child safety issue.
- He works closely with MARAC.
- The court can order an offender to complete an IDAP programme. However, it is difficult for an offender to complete a course if they have a short licence.
- Research has indicated that non-completion could actually increase the risk of reoffending so it is important that every effort is made to enable offenders to complete the courses. An offender may be asked to continue attending on a voluntary basis or to self-refer.

In response to questions from the panel, Mr Clayton clarified the following points:

- Probationers are asked to complete annual surveys which are used to review how the service could be improved. Personal details are removed and the data is sent to the Ministry of Justice for review. The forms are then destroyed.

David Elkins gave an overview of how the police service supports domestic abuse perpetrators:

- Officers attending a domestic abuse incident, complete a Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment and Honour Based Violence (DASH) form to assess the victim's risk. This is sent to the police Central Referral Unit which reviews the risk assessment, incorporating any relevant history.
- If children or a vulnerable adult is involved, a referral is made to Children Social Care or Adult Social Care.
- Safeguarding Officers aim to meet victims considered to be at high risk within 24 hours to offer safety planning advice. This may include the supply of equipment such as door braces, alarm phones (TECSOS), personal hand-held alarms. The cases are referred to the Early Intervention Programme for long term support by an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate.
- Phone calls are made to victims who are considered to be at medium risk to offer safety advice, safety equipment and referral to support agencies.
- Leaflets are sent to a safe address for victims who are at low risk.
- Inspector Elkins co-chairs the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference with Sharon Furtado, Hate Crime Service Manager. Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Waterlooville and Portsmouth MARACs review approximately 110 high risk cases per month, of which 55-60 are from Portsmouth.
- IDAP and IDAM programmes are being trialled in Southampton.
- Some low risk offenders are given the choice of attending as part of a 'conditional' caution, rather than the case proceeding to court.
- Inspector Elkins commented that the proposed privatisation of some of the Probation functions which incorporate payment by results, could discourage them from contacting the police where the offenders they manage commit crime.

In response to questions from the panel, Inspector Elkins clarified the following points:

- More than 80% of domestic abuse perpetrators are arrested. An arrest may lead to a prosecution, depending on the availability of evidence and support of the victim. It can be difficult to bring a case to court without the victim's support where there are no other witnesses.
- Typically, the perpetrator can have emotional control over the victim; this can increase if they are the victim's carer or the victim has substance misuse issues.
- There are few Perpetrator courses available for female offenders as a minimum number of attendees is required for a course to run and there are not as many female perpetrators.
- There has been an increase of same sex couples reporting domestic abuse to the police. This indicates that the gay community are feeling more confident in accessing the service.
- The definition of domestic abuse perpetrators and victims now include 16 and 17 year olds so we are dealing with younger perpetrators and victims.
- The Central Referral Unit reviews the initial risk assessment, taking into account history. High Risk cases are referred to the IDVA service which carries out another risk assessment with the victim.
- The safeguarding team comprises of the equivalent of 7 full time officers and 7 full time support staff.
- Alcohol and drug misuse may be used as a coping mechanism by victims of domestic abuse.
- Many domestic abuse murder victims have little or no contact with the police, which suggests that there are those most at risk which we don't know about.
- Eight years ago the police were seeing approximately 3,000 domestic abuse cases per year. The increase since then may be due to increased reporting.
- People with mental health illness often have substance misuse issues as well. There is a need for more support agencies to take a lead in resolving domestic abusive relationships.

In response to questions from members, Bruce Marr explained that:

- There are many pieces of research which focus on perpetrator programmes; however many most look at output rather than outcomes.
- The Respect Programme is a national organisation that has started research into outcomes of perpetrators' programme. The results will be published in a couple of years' time. It is important that success is measured in terms of different area's needs. E.g. if child protection is an issue then that is monitored.
- There has been some doubt about the effectiveness of the perpetrators' programmes.
- The review of domestic services in Portsmouth identified that there was a lack of programmes for perpetrators. The Safer Portsmouth Partnership has used £30,000 funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner to develop it this year. This could include a women only programme as there

is none currently available. Discussions are underway with Hampshire to see if this facility could be shared.

- The toxic trio: alcohol; drugs and mental health issues are key factors in domestic abuse.
- Some of the Safer Portsmouth Partnership's priorities are young people and substance misuse and anti-social behaviour.
- The police refer to domestic violence rather than abuse because they can prosecute for cases of violence. Abuse can be emotional or financial as well as sexual and physical.
- Research has shown that babies who have been victims of domestic abuse can show the same signs of post-traumatic stress as soldiers returning from war.
- Not all child victims or witnesses go on to be perpetrators or victims later on in life.
- The young people practitioner post was removed due to cuts in funding.
- The government funds Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA) which oversees MARACs and provides training for young people advocates. Portsmouth City Council identified a child social care officer to become a young people's advocate and who will attend three sessions in November and three in January. Further details are not yet known. Mr Marr meets with Children's Social Services to ensure that this is progressed.
- Children's Social Care is child-centred as appropriate. However, social workers are being trained so that they can better manage the needs of adults and children.
- Data shows that alcohol or drug use is involved in at least 67% of domestic abuse cases in Portsmouth. It is difficult to encourage people to engage with the support services because of the substance misuse issues.
- There are three national criteria for dealing with families under the Troubled Families programme: worklessness; offending/ anti-social behaviour and poor education outcomes.
- Portsmouth City Council chose the following additional criteria: there are children subject to a Child Protection Plan, Children in Need, Domestic Abuse and where there is multi-agency involvement. 729 families were identified and the council is working with 200.
- Children's Social Care has started to record parental issues (e.g. mental health illness or domestic abuse).
- Support to victims of domestic abuse can only be provided with the agreement of the victim..
- Housing Officers enter local authority tenants' homes and so potentially could identify domestic abuse and to ask the right questions.
- It is important that staff from all support organisations feel confident enough to create an environment where can ask the victim about any possible domestic abuse.
- Staff at Children's Centres are trained to identify signs of domestic abuse.
- Two levels of training are offered to any frontline professional to raise awareness of domestic abuse so that they feel confident enough to ask questions and know how to support clients who disclose this issue.

- Councillors are very welcome to attend the training.
- A campaign is currently running aimed at helping 16 to 25 year olds to identify what is a healthy relationship. These display QR codes to enable people to access support website.
- Secondary schools and colleges are also visited to Apps on posters. Get people to realise what is a healthy relationship.

Councillor Young explained that

- When a person is at a stage in their lives where they can make a change, they will make the positive steps to change their lives and the perpetrator programmes assist them to do so.
- The IDAP cannot hold mixed sex programmes.
- Councillor Young explained that the probation service works with many agencies.
- There is a correlation between substance abuse and domestic abuse.
- The probation service is changing the way it is run. Low and medium risk offenders will be managed by community rehabilitation companies from Autumn 2014. No details are available yet.
- The proposed payments by results will not be a perverse incentive and discourage the probation service from liaising with the police.

Councillor Stockdale reminded witnesses that the panel's aim was to understand the strategic approach for development that was identified under the following headings:

- a) Community response.
- b) Raise awareness and understanding.
- c) Safeguarding programme.
- d) Managing demand.
- e) Creating capacity to support medium and standard risk cases.

Dr Fellowes explained that as a GP, she sees many vulnerable patients and is confident in asking questions about domestic abuse. There is usually trust built up between client and doctor.

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

- The level of nurses' and GPs' understanding of domestic abuse issues is variable.
- It may be necessary to ask indirect questions to encourage patients to open up about problems at home.
- The Advocate Educators deliver training to GPs to encourage them to ask these questions and to ensure that they know how to support their patients if there is a disclosure.
- GPs can refer patients to the Early Intervention Programme.
- Medicine may be prescribed if appropriate.
- The most dangerous time for a woman and her children is just prior to and just after separation from the perpetrator so it is essential that the safety nets are in place.
- Portsmouth City Council and the Portsmouth CCG provide £150,000 for the Identification and Referral to Improve Safety (IRIS) programme and

£10,000 for the perpetrators programme.

- It would be difficult for a patient to pick up a leaflet about domestic abuse in the GP waiting room without running the risk of being seen by someone who knows them.
- Posters containing domestic abuse support advice are displayed in some public toilets.
- Young people are more likely to binge drink at the weekend and this may be when domestic abuse occurs.
- It is important that work children are taught what constitutes a normal, healthy relationship.
- On average there are 35 episodes before disclosure.
- It can be difficult for non-EU nationals resident here to leave a spouse or partner as they have no recourse to public funds.

Councillor Foster commented that Barnados ran a programme in Ireland to support children who witness domestic abuse. It also produced a book delivered to every home which discreetly contained domestic abuse support contact numbers.

The meeting closed at 5.35pm.