

Agenda item: **Meeting:** Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Safety**Subject:** Impact of the change in definition of Domestic Abuse**Date of decision:** 12th June 2013**Report by:** Head of Health, Safety and Licensing**Wards affected:** All**Key decision:** No**Budget & policy framework decision:** No

1 Summary

In March 2013 the Home Office expanded their definition of domestic abuse to include 16 and 17 year olds and coercive controlling behaviour. Portsmouth needs to consider what impact this may have on any coordinated community response to domestic abuse.

2 Purpose of report

To update the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Safety on the change in Home Office definition of domestic abuse and to consider the implications of this for Portsmouth.

3 Background

- 3.1 In March 2013 the Home Office changed their definition of domestic abuse to:
"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."
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 Portsmouth City Councils' specialist provision, the Early Intervention Project, has always provided support to anyone aged 16 and over who are assessed as being at high risk of domestic abuse. However, following the outcome of the domestic abuse commissioning review, (commissioned by the Safer

Portsmouth Partnership and the Children's Trust Board), there has been an increase in capacity to support all survivors of domestic abuse through:

- a redesign of specialist provision,
 - increased funding by health services and
 - a co-ordinated community response including identification of 30 domestic abuse practitioners across partner agencies (including adult and children providers and the voluntary sector)
- 3.4 Portsmouth has also always encouraged the reporting of domestic abuse by young people aged 16 and over, and in autumn 2012 ran a communications campaign in schools, colleges, youth clubs and other venues used by young people to raise awareness of domestic abuse amongst young people.
- 3.5 In response to the lowering of the age range, the Department for Education has launched a two year programme from May 2013 to support areas in developing care pathways for young people (aged 13 - 18) experiencing a range of "intimate partner abuse including domestic abuse, sexual exploitation, gangs/young perpetrators, HBV/forced marriage and cyber stalking". Funding is being provided to Coordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA) to provide Young Peoples Regional Advisors and training and for each area to identify a named practitioner who will be the designated Young Peoples Advocate for their area. Portsmouth is in the process of considering their position.
- 3.6 When considering Portsmouth's needs, the Safer Portsmouth Partnership is undertaking analysis of all violent crime. From 1st April 2011 to 31st March 2012 26% (and possibly up to 28% depending on police coding) of all violent crime is domestic related (1505). Of these:
- 394 were recorded violent crimes listed as family violence with 22 of these incidents where the victims were 16 or 17. 6 of these were classified as domestic abuse cases while 16 were family violence. Of the 22 there are no details about 13 of the offenders with the remaining 8 aged between 16 and 61 (one between 16 and 17).
 - Of the remaining 1111, 23 records show the victim to be aged 16 or 17. 16 were recorded as between partners or former partners and 7 were "family" (included above).
 - When merging this data there are 38 recorded violent crimes that were listed as family or domestic abuse (partner or former partner) where the victim was aged 16 or 17. 2.5% (38 of 1505) of all incidents.
- 3.7 However there are a number of factors that need to be considered with this data including:
- This data is collected prior to the change in definition of domestic abuse and therefore may be an under representative and recording issues.

- Domestic abuse is significantly under reported so there will potentially be cases where the victim was aged 16 or 17 and the offender/suspect was not a family member, which won't have been reported or if so possibly not as a domestic abuse incident.

3.8 There has also been a growing number of reports of young person on adult abuse however finding data to identify the level of concern has proved difficult (due to having to analyse each individual case). There were 101 records showing an adult victim of crime and a suspect aged between 9 and 18 (18 is included as some of these would have occurred when the suspect was 17). Of these, 46 family violence crime incidents recorded a suspect aged 16 or 17 and related to 28 individuals.

4 Recommendations

4.1 That the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Safety note and accept the changed definition of domestic abuse.

5. Reasons for recommendations

5.1 Following the domestic abuse commissioning review a co-ordinated community response to supporting survivors of domestic abuse is being embedded across partners. This includes supporting partner agencies to recognise and respond to domestic abuse which already includes young people aged 16 and 17.

6. Implications

6.1 With the change in definition there may some increase in identification by some agencies however for agencies that already support young people aged over 16 there is likely to be little impact as they will continue to provide support.

7. Equality impact assessment (EIA)

7.1 A preliminary EIA was completed for the Early Intervention Project in March 2012. It was identified that a new full EIA is not required.

8. Legal implications

8.1 There are no legal comments relevant at this time.

9. Head of finance's comments

9.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

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Signed by: Head of Health, Safety and Licensing

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
1 Nil	
2	

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Safety.

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Signed by: Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Safety