

Agenda Item No: 11
Report To: CABINET
Date: 11th February 2016
Report Title: Domestic Abuse Annual Report
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Portfolio Holder: Cllr Heyes – Portfolio Responsibility for Highways, Wellbeing and Safety



Summary: This paper sets out for comment the progress the council and its partners have made on projects relating to domestic abuse over the past 12 months. It specifically addresses:

- The current position on the Kent and Medway Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) service,
- The work of the council's Domestic Abuse Coordinator, and
- The programme of work going forward.

Key Decision: No

Affected Wards: All

Recommendations: The Cabinet be asked to:-

- i. **Endorse the work of partners in tackling domestic abuse.**
- ii. **To note the work of the Independent Domestic Violence Advisors and the council's Domestic Abuse Coordinator.**
- iii. **To note the achievements of the Ashford Domestic Abuse Forum on obtaining charitable status.**

Policy Overview: Our work on domestic abuse is as a crucial part of the council's aspirations to build a civilised society that ensures support and protection is provided to those who are among the most vulnerable.

Financial Implications: The council allocated up to £50,000 per year for three years to support the work on tackling domestic abuse which includes funding for the post of Domestic Abuse Coordinator.

Risk Assessment Addressed within the body of the report.

**Other Material
Implications:**

Addressed within the body of the report.

**Background
Papers:**

None

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Report Title: Domestic Abuse Annual Report

Purpose of the Report

1. This paper sets out for comment the progress the council and its partners are making on projects focusing on domestic abuse over the past 12 months since the agreement by the council to allocate up to £50,000 per year for three years to support the work on tackling domestic abuse.
2. Specifically it sets out progress on:
 - Funding of the Kent and Medway Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) service.
 - Evaluating the work of the Domestic Abuse Coordinator.
 - The programme of work going forward.

Issue to be Decided

3. The Cabinet be asked to:-
 - i. Endorse the work of partners in tackling domestic abuse.
 - ii. Note the work of the Independent Domestic Violence Advisors and the Domestic Abuse Coordinator.
 - iii. Note the achievements of the Ashford Domestic Abuse Forum on obtaining charitable status.

Background

4. This report highlights key achievements from the last year as well as our actions for tackling domestic abuse in the future. Data has been provided by a range of partners.
5. There have been a huge number of successes across the county and the borough over the last 12 months. There are still many challenges ahead with an increased number of reports to police, increased referrals to MARAC¹ and an increase in attendance at the One Stop Shop².
6. The last year has seen agencies providing services with an increasing workload and more often than not a reduction in resources. Professionals have to work in partnership more than ever.

¹ A Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (**MARAC**) is a local, multi agency victim-focussed meeting where information is shared on the highest risk cases of domestic violence and abuse between different statutory and voluntary sector agencies.

² The One Stop Shop is a confidential service for people experiencing domestic violence

7. The purpose of the report is to demonstrate what has been achieved over the last 12 months and what we want to achieve in the future. This relies on the continued work of partners within the Borough, something Ashford can pride itself on. What has been achieved so far and what we hope to achieve would not be possible without those dedicated to dealing with domestic abuse, the hard work they commit to under increased pressure, and the huge effort which is made to ensure those suffering domestic abuse are afforded protection and safety as well as working towards preventing domestic abuse.

Services in Ashford

8. Ashford Borough Council has committed to providing £50,000 of funding towards the Kent Domestic Abuse Consortium (KDAC) for the provision of an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor for Ashford, as well as to fund a Domestic Abuse Coordinator post within the council. This post provides assistance to the Ashford Domestic Forum (ADAF), coordinates support groups available to victims and ensures statutory partners and related organisations are coordinating their work in tackling domestic abuse.
9. The co-commissioned Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) service in Ashford is delivered through Rising Sun. The Ashford IDVA has continued to provide a service to high risk victims throughout 2015.
10. The role of the MARAC IDVA is to address the safety of those identified as experiencing high risk domestic abuse. Acting as a primary contact IDVA's work proactively with their clients from point of crisis to assess the level of risk, discuss a range of options and develop safety plans. IDVA's act as an advocate on the victim's behalf, exploring options and support. The service aims to encourage and enable the victim's voice to be heard by service providers and agencies, ensuring the advice and support offered safeguards the victim and their family.
11. The IDVA treats every case individually. For victims to feel safe listening to their needs and experiences is vital and be able provide a response tailored to them, this is crucial to help those looking to live a life free from abuse.
12. To give an idea of the scale of work that they undertake each quarter there are around 30 to 40 service referrals to the IDVA. Of all MARAC cases 82% have been supported within Ashford. Those not supported would have either declined the service or received alternative assistance. The Ashford IDVA engaged with 88% of clients referred to them, and those reporting a reduction of risk were 94%.
13. In January 2015 an independent evaluation of the Kent and Medway IDVA service was published. This included a cost benefit analysis that calculated the service is generating net savings of £19,860,792. Every £1 invested in the Kent & Medway IDVA service generates savings of £25.18 i.e. it saves money investing in domestic abuse.
14. Through Rising Sun other provisions have been available to Ashford residents. They offer a counselling service which is managed by a highly qualified and experienced psychotherapist who assesses all women who require the counselling service and matches them to a volunteer counsellor.

Women are offered 12 sessions initially, which is free to all women who have experienced domestic abuse.

15. Rising Sun have also offered one to one and group work to children affected by domestic abuse. On behalf of Kent County Council Rising Sun delivered the "All About Me" programme to children aged 5 to 11. They are one of the county's leaders in working with children who have experienced domestic abuse and lead the delivery of children and youth projects across Kent for KDAC.
16. Kent Police have recorded over 20,000 incidents of domestic abuse every year since 2006. Between January 2015 and December 2015, Ashford had 799 notifiable offences. 457 of those were identified as medium risk and 196 identified as high risk. 71 young people aged between 12-18 years were the primary victim of domestic abuse. There were 455 repeat victims, which equates to 25.6%.
17. Domestic abuse continues to be one of the police's priorities. They are committed to protecting those at risk of domestic abuse and prevent further harm. 2015 saw the implementation of specialist Domestic Abuse Single Points of Contact (SPOC) across the county. Ashford now has a full time officer who deals with medium risk cases in the Borough, as well as offering support to partners. Ashford also has a number of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) who have supported the work of partners and continue to use their skills and knowledge to help victims of domestic abuse and hold perpetrators to account.
18. Ashford has one of the busiest One Stop Shops (OSS) in the County. Kent are afforded the ability to have a network of One Stop Shops throughout the county with a Kent and Medway Domestic Violence Coordinator who facilitates a formal network with shared practice and agreed protocols, unlike any other area in the country.
19. This network is overseen by the county wide operational group and each borough has a local sub group. Domestic abuse is a key priority for the Ashford Community Safety Partnership. This priority's lead is the Ashford Domestic Abuse Forum (ADAF), a local charity that oversees the coordination of the Ashford One Stop Shop, as well as other key projects.
20. Ashford's OSS has a high level of staff attendance and good reputation for partnership working. Throughout 2015 we have seen this continue, with fewer pressures on our partners as a consequence of the management support being provided by the Domestic Abuse Coordinator post.
21. The OSS also continues to be an area for professionals to work together in a coordinated response, facilitate training of their roles, as well as the services available at the OSS. Often agencies will come to observe the running of the OSS.
22. This year has seen the council's Housing Options Team strengthen commitment to attend weekly one hour slots; to ensure anyone attending with urgent housing need can be dealt with quickly and efficiently. This is proving

highly successful for clients at the OSS with positive feedback from both victims and professionals.

23. Ashford One Stop Shop has developed an excellent reputation across the county and has strong partner links. At a time when resources are reduced and there are added pressures and caseloads, it is important victims of domestic abuse, regardless of their risk level, can access face to face support and advice. The table below illustrates the rise in visitors to the Ashford OSS year-on-year. The data relates to the period July to June each year.

No of visitors 2010/11	No of visitors 2011/12	No of visitors 2012/13	No of visitors 2013/14	No of visitors 2014/15
75	169	239	316	317

Busiest month	No of Visitors	Quietest Month	No of Visitors
June 2015	45	April 2015	14

24. Ashford has a high number of visitors from within the borough. Often, victims prefer to access services outside of their local authority area for fear of being seen by the perpetrator, or due to concerns with disclosing information to local services. This year saw an increase of those within the borough accessing the service up 21% on the previous year.
25. There is also a positive amount of returning visitors, with 19% of visitors attending an OSS on two or more occasions.

Visitors from within LA area	Visitors who attended 2+ times
93% (previous year 72%)	19% (Previous year 22%)

26. During the year, 15 male victims attended the OSS which accounts for 5% of the total attendance.
27. Of the attendees 84% were White British with 14% from other ethnicities (6% were White European) and a further 2% ethnicity was unknown. Support was not only provided by those who actually attended the OSS but indirectly 480 children were supported. While it is difficult to evaluate the outcomes for individual people, 100% report that the visitor and support given was helpful (response rate 74%).
28. The recording of outcomes has been a challenge, as dealing with service users at the point of crisis and requesting them to provide feedback on the service is always sensitive and can sometime be extremely difficult. The data capture for outcomes is something which partners must work towards in the coming year. The success of the OSS is, however best reflected by some of the visitor's stories and feedback, an example of which is provided at Appendix A.
29. As more people access the OSS, we need to continue to meet this demand and provide services to keep victims and their family safe. We have an increased number of professionals who are attending OSS. We now have Housing Options, a caseworker from Porchlight and the Coordinator as regular support. Kent Fire and Rescue Service have dedicated a volunteer

who will be able to offer support in the coming year. Agency referrals are the main signpost to the OSS, with 211 of the total visitors reporting they heard about the service through an agency. This is a reflection of the partnership working within Ashford, and we hope to continue to build on this awareness with local services.

30. Due to the growth of the OSS, and high number of visitors, the council and the Forum will be working towards opening a rural drop-in service in 2016 for Tenterden and surrounding areas. A venue has already been identified and it is hoped delivery of a domestic abuse multi agency drop-in will begin shortly. This will alleviate any travel pressures for those victims who may be based in the more rural parts of the Borough, or who are unable to access the main OSS on Tuesdays.

Group work

31. Ashford has a consistent approach for delivering support groups. The main service being the Freedom Programme, a 12 week information course to help victims of domestic abuse recognise the impact of domestic abuse on their and their children's lives, understand the behaviour they were exposed to and also to understand warning signs in possible future relationships.
32. This has been provided in Ashford for a number of years. It is delivered by a range of partners; however, Ashford is noted for the strong commitment the Early Help and Preventative Services (EHPS) provide. The majority of facilitators for this group are provided by EHPS, as well as other partners such as the Kent Community Health (NHS) Foundation Trust, KCC (especially the education service) and the council. The rooms and crèche are also provided free of charge via the Beaver Community Trust, a commissioned service within Ashford for KCC.
33. 2015 saw the development of second and complimentary programme for victims of domestic abuse. Feedback from participants was that although they were able to access the Freedom Programme twice, they still felt it would be beneficial to have another group which follows on from this.
34. The forum was successful in a bid to the Ashford Soroptimists who provided funding to train eight facilitators for Ashford. A commitment was also received from the Children's Centres to use their facilities and crèche as well as some costs for running the group, as the costs are higher due to the more intensive nature of the course.
35. The Recovery Toolkit is a psycho-educational resource which includes a cognitive behavioural therapy module. It can be offered to women and also men and provides a follow on to the Freedom Programme. This programme was offered for the first time in early January and early reports are extremely positive. Over 90% of those who signed up to the programme attended, and this is an usually high attendance rate. It is hoped to continue offering this each term to run alongside the Freedom Programme, it should alleviate pressure on waiting lists as well as providing additional support to those who have previously engaged with our services and need further help.

36. An ambition for the Forum is that eventually a group could be run for male victims, as Kent Police and OSS data shows an increasing number of male victims are coming forward. A target for the next year is to identify a male professional who would be able to facilitate this and begin working towards setting up a male victims group, something which is currently not offered anywhere within Kent.
37. Further work for the coming year will involve the council and partners developing a preventative programme for young people. There are a number of programmes available for young people and the Forum and Early Help and Preventative services are looking at the most appropriate programme to use and roll this out in the coming year across Ashford. This will ensure young people have access to a service which helps them understand healthy relationships. This cuts across many priorities not just for domestic abuse, but would lend itself to work being done in the area of child sexual exploitation as well as the Supporting Families and the Prevent duty agendas.

Training and Awareness

38. A key action for the Forum was to develop an iBook for young people. This has been achieved by working with professionals at Homewood School, and is due to be released later this year. It will enable young people to access information and support, and is available to any young person with an Apple device. A link will be made available via the Forum once the final version has been agreed and finalised.
39. Implementation of new legislation such as the stalking legislation 2012 and the coercive control legislation³ which was introduced in December 2015, means that training and awareness needs to continually be developed and offered to partners to ensure front line professionals are able to cope with changes to provide the best service possible for victims.
40. In addition to this training, work with the Hospital Trust, Specialist Children's Services, Early Help and Preventative Services and local businesses are all important links which will be offered specialist training in the coming year. The Domestic Abuse Coordinator will be able to provide free training to ensure the best possible response to victims of domestic abuse and further strengthen partnership links.

Other developments

41. In 2015 the Ashford Domestic Abuse Forum was successful in receiving charitable status. This will enable them to apply for more varied funding streams, to continue with the work its partner agencies deliver as well as providing a flight fund for local victims who are destitute and must leave in an emergency.
42. As previously mentioned preventative work is a key for the Forum. Working with partner agencies to develop programme content and services that are

³ The new offence in the Serious Crime Act closes the gap in the current legal framework in order to capture repeated or continuous coercive or controlling behaviour.

appropriate for young people, helping them further understand healthy relationships and develop their understanding of domestic abuse is vital. This will cut across areas of child sexual exploitation, which is also a priority for the Community Safety Partnership.

43. Another priority moving forward is to ensure there is adequate provision of perpetrator programmes. There is currently a national pilot to assess the importance of working directly with high risk perpetrators. Ashford, like some other areas across the county, does not currently offer any perpetrator programmes. This is due to funding as we know there is a gap in services allocated to perpetrators. We would like to see funding provided to ensure robust and consistent work is carried out with perpetrators of domestic abuse, in the hope this will be another step in breaking the cycle of abuse.
44. Work between the Forum and Housing Options has already begun. In October 2015 the Housing Options Team worked with partners to put together a bid to the Home Office. Although this bid was unsuccessful, the council are aware provision of accommodation for victims of domestic abuse is costly and with decreasing funds to provision of women's refuges, continues to be a challenge to find appropriate placements. It is the vision of the council and the Forum that this work will continue in the future to ensure those most vulnerable due to domestic abuse can be provided with suitable and cost effective accommodation.
45. Housing Options have undertaken a homelessness review and refreshed their homelessness strategy which is currently out to consultation. Along with the aforementioned attendance at OSS, there is also now a strengthened commitment at MARAC, and regular attendance at the Forum meeting, ensuring new updates and projects are shared. Joint work continues well in this way and the Forum and Housing Options will continue this work together in the coming year.
46. A review of the council's administration of the Sanctuary Scheme is currently underway. An initiative which allows those at risk of homelessness or further violence due to domestic abuse the option to remain in their home with enhanced security. This review is being conducted with the Forum and other partners' feedback and Housing Options will continue to work with partners to ensure a streamlined and cost effective service.

Commission across Kent

47. Kent has recently undertaken a review of the commissioning of IDVA services. The decision as to what services need to be commissioned is still being determined, and this could be of real significance (and potential risk) for Ashford. The hope is to provide a more streamlined service and secure front line delivery. Ensuring less duplication of work and more appropriate services available for victims. However, at the time of writing the service is due to be rolled out in July 2016, with no clear picture of the service provision or even who this service provider will be.
48. Officers will continue to work with this service to ensure a seamless transition and continue the coordinated approach and joined up partnership working which has continued in Ashford for many years.

Equalities Impact Assessment

49. This report reflects on progress over the last year. It is not necessary to undertake an EIA at this point in time. The services are open to all.

Other Options Considered

50. Clearly there is more that could be done on this important agenda. Cuts to services have hit domestic abuse services hard and in some situations the quality of support given has suffered. There is a need to consider the wider impact this has on our society. Domestic abuse comes at a huge cost to the public purse, and this will not change until there is a change in society's attitudes towards this crime. Prevention and rehabilitation is of fundamental importance as is ensuring that the services we provide are consistently provided.
51. Joint working is the key to a successful response to domestic abuse. It is the vision of the council that we continue to work towards securing funding for services which can save lives, as well as aid recovery, awareness raising and prevention. Working for and with our partners is crucial in terms of providing support to each other, sharing knowledge and best practice, coordinating awareness raising, undertaking training, and preventative measures.
52. Funding is of course a major barrier. This reports sets out our agenda for the next year and we hope in future to present further options for the council to build on this work.

Consultation

53. In preparing this report the views of our major stakeholders were sought. The following paragraphs indicate what they feel about the support provided by the council as well as updating on their particular focus.
54. Chair of the Ashford Domestic Abuse Service: "With the constant pressure to raise money relieved by this funding, it has enabled us to make time to forge the links that are so important to the smooth running and continued improvement of our offer. We have been very grateful for the commitment of ABC's Housing Department to regularly attend the One Stop Shop to advise those who have to leave their home. In addition, they put in considerable work in writing bids for additional funding from central Government, both of which had to be completed in a very short time. Unfortunately, they were unsuccessful, but will provide very useful information for the bids we intend to write to charities. In this connection ADAF achieved Charitable Status in the autumn of 2015 shortly before our 5th birthday was celebrated in the ABC Council Chamber with a multi-agency list of invitees. Our charitable status will enable us to widen the scope of our work and help with our aims of attracting more of the hard-to-reach clients some of whom are in outlying areas of the Borough with no access to transport. We are grateful to the Police and also the Community Safety Partnership who have been so supportive of our work. In this connection the Police have been very proactive in organising their own fundraising events to help us, and we also received £6,200 from the Police and Crime Commissioner to help with the funding of much needed crèche

facilities at the Ashford Refuge. We believe that we are playing a valuable part in helping victims, particularly those who also come from Troubled Families, helping them to rebuild their lives and get back into the work place, and in turn this also helps their children. Our focus in the coming year will be how we can do more to break the cycle of abuse. Work has already started with schools, and we want to develop this and also look at what can be done to change the behaviour of perpetrators”.

55. Chief Inspector, Ashford District Commander and East Division Health and Wellbeing Lead: “Kent Police are committed to protecting and safeguarding vulnerable people, who are in or have been in relationships. This is best served by working together with our partners through the community safety partnership and Ashford Borough Council. At Ashford, we have invested in a dedicated Domestic Abuse SPOC, whose role is to review the level of support, that we have provided victims of domestic abuse and sought opportunities for enhanced safeguarding and protection of our most vulnerable people”.
56. Service Director, Rising Sun Domestic Violence and Abuse Service, “I wish to thank Ashford Borough Council for their commitment and hard work throughout the year and their continued support and commitment to our shared vision of ending domestic abuse. In pursuit of that goal Ashford Borough Council and the Ashford Domestic Abuse Forum continue to raise awareness, improve practice and deliver effective responses to protect and adults, children and young people with experience of domestic abuse. This year the services provided by Ashford Borough Council has continued to grow and demand has continued to increase which is positive in that families are seeking help to improve their lives but negative in that Domestic Abuse is still an issue in today’s society. Like all of the Public and Third Sector, who are struggling to cope in the current economic climate where funding shrinks rapidly whilst demand for services grows. How are we managing? Simple, Ashford has a dedicated and hardworking team who are committed to delivering our high quality service to adults, children and young people and have those who need support as their priority.”

Implications Assessment

57. Local authorities play a vital and central role in tackling domestic violence. As well as providing services and raising awareness, the council’s role at the heart of local communities means that they are well placed to facilitate local partnerships – bringing all the agencies together to tackle this issue. As well as the direct and devastating damage to the victim or their families, there are significant costs to the local authority in terms of providing social service support, emergency housing costs, lost of economic output and costs to the police and health services.
58. Councils have a key role, alongside other agencies, in tackling domestic abuse by safeguarding survivors, offering services to reduce the impact of the abuse and holding perpetrators to account. It's easiest to understand this role by dividing it into three areas: councils input into local partnerships; their corporate response, and direct service provision. All this is complimentary to the work undertaken by the voluntary sector, criminal justice professionals and other public service providers.

59. At present the level of direct funding to the council is £50,000 per year for three years. Funding is currently provided by the Health, Parking & Community Safety service core budget.

Handling

60. The report reflects on the last year domestic abuse activity. The work will continue as agreed by Cabinet through to end March 2018 representing three full years of funding.

Conclusion

61. This local picture of domestic abuse is reflected nationally. Reporting of domestic abuse continues to rise for police forces, and service providers report increasing referrals. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) found reporting of domestic abuse increase by almost a third on the reporting year to April 2015. Although violent crime is said to be reducing, new research⁴ has found that victims of domestic abuse are not accurately portrayed in these statistics, and when looking at victims of domestic abuse and violence against women, the figures have continued to rise since 2009, when the financial crisis began and cuts to services started.
62. Further outreach work is also needed across the borough; one area which would be a focus for this work would be the rural areas, although KDAC and group provision is available to anyone in the Borough. As most of these victims are extremely isolated, travel for them to get to the main town is difficult and costly. Should a medium risk outreach worker be in post, more could be done to support those in need within community.
63. With the appointment of a full time Domestic Abuse Coordinator the council has been able to offer training sessions to partner agencies and local services to ensure continued development of those engaging with victims of domestic abuse. This is helping to ensure best practice, encourage joint working and the promotion of local services. In the current financial climate most organisations are working with reduced funds, and have less to spend on outside training. The scope of domestic abuse is constantly changing and it is important professionals stay up to date with new legislation and policy.
64. A number of events were coordinated, held and delivered through the council, we hope this will continue as the training provided is essential for partnership working and ensuring best practice within services. Training was delivered on risk assessment, domestic abuse awareness and the range of services being provided in Ashford. Domestic abuse training has been provided for those working with those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. Other sessions have focused on mental health and young people, awareness of domestic abuse in the gypsy and traveller community, county wide delivery of

⁴ S.Walby, J. Towers, B. Francies, IS VIOLENT CRIME INCREASING OR DECREASING? A NEW METHODOLOGY TO MEASURE REPEAT ATTACKS MAKING VISIBLE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GENDER AND DOMESTIC RELATIONS. *British Journal of Criminology* December 2015. Available online: <http://bjc.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2015/12/31/bjc.azv131.full.pdf+html>

Freedom Programme facilitator training as well as a 5th anniversary event for the OSS which recognised of the work the Forum have completed.

65. The council and the Forum will continue to work in partnership to meet the targets set over the next 12 months. The Forum has received charitable status, meaning additional funding streams will be available. Work towards securing funding is a priority as well as holding fundraising events to raise awareness.
66. The work being done across the borough to support the domestic abuse agenda has been extremely valuable. Services are dealing with more victims than ever before, feedback from other agencies and organisations has been positive and many women and their children have been supported. The council continues to have a very serious interest and part to play in helping families in crisis. In continuing to fund this area of work we are able to help ensure that services are coordinated and that Ashford has the necessary dedicated professions to keep helping those at real risk.

Portfolio Holder's Views

67. The portfolio holder will be making his comments at the Cabinet meeting.

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Appendix A

Laura*, 29 from Ashford was a visitor to the OSS. She spent five years in an abusive relationship until she accessed the OSS. She says “He was never physically violent but he was so controlling and jealous I felt suffocated. I wasn’t allowed to see my friends so I felt very isolated and his constant control over who I saw and where I went almost ruined my relationship with my family. I was exhausted from having to act normal around him so he wouldn’t get suspicious. He controlled all of our money to the point I wasn’t allowed to have any cash on me. Once he went through my pockets and found a pound coin and demanded to know why. One day I just had enough. I snapped and decided I had to leave.”

After she visited her GP, the mum of two was given details of the One Stop Shop and came along one week.

“I was concerned that I would be the only one there, but I was there all day and by the end I was absolutely sure this was the right decision for me and my kids.” Laura was then referred to the Freedom Programme by the health visitor, who also took on her case and continued to support her and the children. “The programme taught me to recognise his bad behaviour and convinced me to trust myself and my instincts. It gave me the strength to leave.”

Since leaving her partner Laura went to live with her parents and is waiting to be rehoused, her health visitor supported her with her housing application and Laura and her family are looking forward to being in their own home.

“The support we have had has been brilliant. My son has been receiving play therapy to help him come to terms with the changes and because I feel safe and secure I have had the confidence to start volunteering at his school so I can start training as a teaching assistant. It’s a new start for us and I couldn’t have done it without all the different help I received at the One Stop Shop.”

*Names have been changed to ensure the safety of the client. This feedback was taken from Kent Community Health Team NHS magazine, which featured Ashford’s lead DA Health Visitor and the invaluable work she continues to do for victims in Ashford.