

Agenda Item No: 11

Report To: CABINET

Date of Meeting: 8th February 2018

Report Title: Domestic Abuse Annual Report

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Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Bradford

Portfolio Holder for: Health, Parking and Community Safety



Summary: This report will update the Cabinet on the multi-agency work completed over the course of 2017 by the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinators. This work is in conjunction with the Ashford Domestic Abuse Forum (ADAF) who supports victims of domestic abuse within the borough.

The report provides the detail of how the work supports victims of domestic abuse and addresses future work plans.

Key Decision: No

Significantly Affected Wards: All

Recommendations: **The Cabinet is recommended to:-**

- I. **Note the work of the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinators and Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs)**
- II. **Endorse the work of partners tackling domestic abuse**
- III. **Agree that future updates on Domestic Abuse are included in the annual Community Safety report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from next year.**

Policy Overview: Our work on domestic abuse is key to supporting those most vulnerable within our communities and provide necessary services.

Financial Implications: None

Legal Implications: None

Equalities Impact Assessment: Not required

Other Material Line management of the council's domestic abuse

Implications: coordinators and responsibility for the overall work programme falls now sits with the Community Safety Team Leader.

Exempt from Publication: No

Background Papers: No

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Report Title: Domestic Abuse annual report

Introduction and Background

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an annual update in relation to the domestic abuse coordinator role and the domestic abuse commissioned services. The report also demonstrates the achievements over the past 12 months and identifies the forward plan. The work around domestic abuse relies on a strong multi-agency approach and this is something that Ashford prides itself on. This is mainly due to the domestic abuse coordinator role being the driving force.
2. The domestic abuse coordinator role is to provide support to the Ashford Domestic Abuse Forum (ADAF), coordinate the One Stop Shop (OSS) and facilitate group courses for victims of domestic abuse such as the “Freedom” programme and “Recovery Tool Kit”.
3. The domestic abuse coordinator role is a full time position that is currently subject to a job share arrangement. This allows for greater flexibility and resilience when directing resources to the One Stop Shop. A review of where the domestic abuse role best sits within the organisation has recently been undertaken. This is to ensure the most effective delivery of services going forward. Our work in this area closely compliments the work undertaken by the Community Safety Unit (CSU), therefore a change of line management with direct report to the Community Safety Team Leader took place from 2 January 2018. Domestic abuse is a key part of community safety and requires the same level of multi-agency engagement alongside the other community safety priorities such as anti-social behaviour and safeguarding. This also compliments the new policing model ‘New Horizon’ that came into force from September 2018 where specialists teams are in place to deal with vulnerabilities and in particular those cases where there is the highest impact on the victims.
4. In addition to funding the domestic abuse coordinator post, the council assists by providing funds towards an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) for Ashford through the Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service.

Current Position

Commissioned Services in Ashford

5. Kent County Council (KCC) redesigned their domestic abuse commissioned services, integrating the support services across the county. Previously women’s refuges and floating support were commissioned by KCC and the IDVA service was partnership funded, with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) holding the contract. The IDVA service is where the council’s funding plays an important role. A number of partners working in the

domestic abuse support field deliver the new integrated service. The contract for Ashford, Canterbury and Shepway is delivered by Centra, with Rising Sun subcontracted to provide the IDVA support from 2017 to 2024. Centra have years of experience of providing refuge support within the borough. A new domestic abuse support service and referral pathway was created in April 2017.

6. Over the next 6 years Rising Sun will continue to provide the IDVA and outreach provision for the borough. This will maintain consistency as Rising Sun have been the service provider within Ashford for many years and have delivered an outstanding service to victims of domestic abuse.
7. IDVAs act as a primary contact for victims of domestic abuse. The IDVA proactively works with a client from the point of crisis to assess the level of risk, discuss the range of options available and act as an advocate on the client's behalf. This service aims to encourage and enable the voice of the victim to be heard by the required service providers ensuring that advice and support given safeguards the victim and their family.
8. The IDVA generally works with victims who have been identified, as high risk, through a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). MARAC is a meeting where information is shared on the highest risk domestic abuse cases between representatives of local police, health, child protection, housing practitioners, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs), probation and other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors.
9. The table below shows the number of Ashford cases which have progressed through the MARAC process:

Year	Cases	Number of repeat victims
Jan 2016 to Sept 2017	107	23
Jan 2017 to Sept 2017	101	28

10. This indicates that the number of initial contact cases in Ashford has slightly reduced. However, the number of repeat victims has increased.
11. Rising Sun have also secured additional funding to provide the following services in Ashford:
 - Adolescent girls' service – This project provides long term mentoring support to girls aged between 11 and 24 who are at risk of being exploited or abused, as well as initiatives to improve relationships between mothers and their daughters.
 - Liberty programme – this is a 10 week supportive group programme for women aged 18-24 who have experienced or are experiencing domestic abuse. The programme explores the tactics and impacts of domestic abuse along with how to identify healthy and unhealthy relationships.

- Adolescent boys’ service – This is a two-year pilot project running from 2016 to 2018. It supports adolescent boys who are showing signs of violent behaviour, normally from being exposed to violence in the family home.
- All about me programme – 1 to 1 support by specialist providers for children who have been affected by domestic abuse.

12. Victim Support play a key role in assisting each of these services. They provide an assessment and triage service at the central referral hub. In addition, they provide support to victims whose cases have been identified as “standard” risk by working with the commissioned services and other agencies to provide proportionate interventions such as extra safety planning advice.

Kent Police

In September 2017, Kent Police were restructured to create a new policing model known as ‘New Horizons’. The core purpose of this restructure was to allow Kent Police to focus on the vulnerability of the victim as opposed to the crime type. They have created a number of specialist roles and teams. The key role in relation to domestic abuse is their Domestic Abuse Police Community Support Officer (PCSOs). They are the main point of contact for those victims identified as medium risk and act as the liaison between partners and Police.

13. Domestic Abuse continues to be a Kent Police priority and they are committed to protecting those at risk and bringing offenders to justice.

Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop

14. The Ashford Domestic Abuse OSS is a free drop-in service for anyone affected in any way by domestic abuse who feels they could benefit from support, help or advice. It is a free and confidential service and no appointment is necessary. This is currently one morning a week in a safe environment.

15. The figures below show the attendance at the Ashford One Stop Shop for the previous two years:

Location	No of visitors 2015/16 (July 2015 to June 2016)	No of visitors 2016/17 (July 2016 to June 2017)	% increase/decrease in visitors (compared to previous year)
Ashford	362	443	20% increase

16. There has been an increase in attendance that it is believed to be due to the leadership, delivery and awareness of the facility that is provided by the domestic abuse coordinator. This also indicates that people affected by domestic abuse have confidence in the service and attend to receive the necessary help and support.

17. There is an increased number of returning visitors, with 20% attending the OSS on two or more occasions. This again highlights how this is an essential service for people affected by domestic abuse. Some of the visitor's stories and feedback (examples of which are provided at **Appendix A**) best reflect the success of the OSS.
18. During the year, July 2016 to June 2017, 26 male victims attended the OSS accounting for just under 6% of the total attendance.
19. Ashford OSS is the second busiest in the county. **Appendix B** provides a full comparison of OSS attendance across the county.
20. The OSS continues to be an area for professionals to work together in a coordinated response. This year has seen the council's Housing Options Team strengthen commitment to attend weekly slots ensuring that anyone attending with urgent housing needs can be dealt with quickly and effectively. This is proving highly successful for clients at the OSS with positive feedback being received from victims and professionals.

Group work

21. Ashford has a consistent approach for delivering support groups. The main service being the 'Freedom' programme. This is a 12-week course to help victims of domestic abuse understand the impact on their lives and their children's lives. It enables them to understand the behaviour that they were exposed to and to be aware of warning signs in possible future relationships.
22. The Freedom Programme is organised by the domestic abuse coordinator and delivered by a number of partners including Early Help and Preventative Services (EHPS), KCC Education Service and Centra. The venue for these courses and any required crèche facilities are also provided free of charge via the Beaver Community Trust, a commissioned service within Ashford.
23. There have been six Freedom programmes completed within the past 12 months and these have supported a total of 94 victims of domestic abuse.
24. In 2015, funding was secured by the ADAF to run 'The Recovery Toolkit' and this funding continues to date. The recovery toolkit is a psycho-educational resource that includes a cognitive behavioural therapy module. In the last 12 months, three courses have run in the borough and this has supported 29 individuals.

Training and awareness

25. It is important that all front line professionals have an awareness of domestic abuse and the referral pathways. The following training has been completed within the borough by the domestic abuse coordinator:
 - Multi-agency awareness session held on 30 November 2017. This was attended by over 50 front line professionals from a variety of agencies including ABC housing, KCC community wardens, schools and mental health.

- Bespoke domestic abuse training was provided to William Harvey Hospital A&E staff, paediatric nurses and hospital administration staff. As a result, the hospital identified that domestic abuse knowledge needed enhancing within the hospital and have since secured funding to provide a hospital IDVA.
- The domestic abuse coordinators organised and facilitated a workshop at “Safety in Action” entitled “Personal responsibilities and consequences”. In total, 1200 primary school year six pupils engaged with this workshop over the two-week event period.
- The domestic abuse coordinator supports the council’s learning and development officer by co-running the Safeguarding Level 2 courses.

Community Safety Partnership Funding

26. Ashford Community Safety Partnership (CSP) receives a small grant from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to support local projects that meet the PCC priorities and those of the CSP. Domestic abuse meets both of those requirements and the following funding was provided to support domestic abuse work:

- £500 provided to the ADAF to act as a flee fund for victims of domestic abuse that have to flee a situation where they are at significant risk of harm. This money is used to purchase essentials such as food, one night’s accommodation or travel. This also provides an accessible fund for victims who do not have recourse to public funds but need emergency help.
- £203 provided for printing costs for OSS advertising cards which are distributed to promote the Ashford shop and encourage victims to attend the free ‘drop in’ service so they can seek support and advice.
- £300 provided for facilitating two domestic abuse awareness courses held in November 2017. Over 50 front line professionals attended these sessions from KCC, ABC, Schools and housing providers.

Moving forward

27. In 2018/19 the key areas of focus for the domestic abuse coordinator will be:

- Perpetrator programme - the domestic abuse coordinator has been trained by Kent, Surrey and Sussex Community Rehabilitation Company (KSS CRC) to deliver this programme. The first course is due to take place in the early part of 2018. This is a 12-week programme for perpetrators of domestic abuse. It aims to assist them to understand the impact of their behaviour and help them to build respectful relationships. The course will be made up with 50% self-referrals and 50% who are required to do so as part of a rehabilitation order.

- Developing greater understanding of ‘hard to reach’ communities and how they can be supported – due to the diversity of the borough it is felt that more work needs to be completed to establish where and how to engage fully to ensure all victims are supported where possible. A community assessment will be completed followed by an action plan in order to understand the best way to provide the services.
- Rural drop in service – due to the size of the borough it is felt that there is a need to explore the options surrounding a “drop in” service to the rural communities. Scoping work will initially be completed to understand the demand alongside the ability to deliver.
- A campaign to increase facilitators to run the group work both professionals and volunteers.
- Completing the Freedom programme review. This is a county-based project and the aim is to continue to deliver the service but more efficiently with reduced delivery costs.
- In 2017, the Council was successful in a bid to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for £100,000 of funding to provide emergency accommodation to people within the borough. The project is aimed at providing a service to female victims of domestic abuse and to provide support to those from hard to reach communities. This project will be progressed through Management Team and ADAF in the form of a project initiation document (PID).

Implications and Risk Assessment

28. Councils play a key role, alongside other agencies, in tackling domestic abuse by safeguarding victims, offering services to reduce the impact and holding perpetrators to account. This has been recognised by the council’s commitment to permanently fund the domestic abuse coordinator post and the financial contribution to the IDVA.

Equalities Impact Assessment

29. Not required as the report relates to a summary of past performances rather than any item requiring a decision. The service is available to everyone.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

30. In preparing this report, the views of our major stakeholders were sought including the Chair of the ADAF, Community Safety Police Inspector and Service Director for Rising Sun.

Conclusion

31. Due to the drive and enthusiasm of the domestic abuse coordinator there has been a great deal of work completed including training events, group work and continued growth of the OSS.
32. The ADAF has received charitable status, meaning additional funding streams will become available. They will be working towards securing funding, as a priority, to support future domestic abuse projects within the borough.
33. The work being undertaken across the borough to support the domestic abuse agenda has been extremely valuable. Services are dealing with more victims than ever before and feedback from other agencies and organisations has been positive with many victims and their families being supported and safeguarded.
34. The council continues to play an integral part in helping those families in crisis. The committed funding for this area of work ensures that services are coordinated and that Ashford has the necessary dedicated professionals to continue helping those at risk. The council can be justifiably proud of its role in helping victims of domestic abuse within the borough.

Portfolio Holder's Views

35. The council continues to play an important role in coordinating the response to domestic abuse. This ensures that Ashford has many excellent services committed to supporting such a worthwhile cause. This report highlights the marvellous work that has been undertaken by a range of agencies and I am impressed by the future work plan. I fully support the recommendation that this report forms part of the Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Process.

Contact and Email

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Appendix A – One Stop Shop Feedback

Service was brilliant and very helpful. Thanks you for your help”

“Great advice. Feel more at ease with my situation and not alone in finding a solution for my son”

“Brilliant service. Advice on everything that was asked for. Police, caring and listens to you. Felt very confident and reassured. Referrals advised and made easy”

“All staff were kind and welcoming. I felt comfortable to be talking to them about my situation”

“Thank you very much. You have given us what we needed”

“It was very informative, I have steps to take to help me move forward with this issue”

The information I received was very beneficial and I found it very helpful and the people are supportive”

Appendix B - One Stop Shop visit figures across the County

Location	No of visitors 2015/16 (July 2015 to June 2016)	No of visitors 2016/17 (July 2016 to June 2017)	% increase/ decrease in visitors (compared to previous year)
Ashford	362	443	22.38%
Canterbury	328	293	-10.67%
Dover	188	208	10.64%
Shepway	260	295	13.46%
Maidstone	222	182	-18.02%
Dartford	138	111	-19.57%
Gravesend	135	106	-21.48%
Herne Bay	163	157	-3.68%
Medway	638	546	-14.42%
Sheerness	167	64	-61.68%
Sittingbourne	208	148	-28.85%
Thanet	281	146	-48.04%
Tonbridge	70	53	-24.29%