

**Scrutiny (Economic Growth, Communities and Health)
Committee**

Scrutiny Review of Domestic Abuse

Committee Members

A Johnson (Chairman)
E W R Barker
R A Faulkner
D Florence-Jukes
Mrs V J Gould
S A Hussain
C B Jones
Mrs J A Killoran
G E Marjoram
S McGarry
S McKiernan
B G Peters
Mrs L Shelton
P Walker
C Wileman
Vacancy
B G Peters

Sub-Group Members

D Florence-Jukes (Sub-group Lead)
R A Faulkner
Mrs L Shelton
C B Jones
S McKiernan
B G Peters

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. This report presents a scrutiny review of Domestic Abuse (DA) with a particular focus on the service provision available to residents of East Staffordshire.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. Evidence from the annual Community Safety Strategic Assessment illustrates the scale of Domestic Abuse in East Staffordshire with 965 incidents reported in 2016/17. Domestic Abuse can have a devastating impact upon the lives of individuals and families and tackling this issue is a multi-agency responsibility.
- 2.2. Research, conducted by members, identified that ESBC has a comprehensive set of policies and procedures to help identify and support victims, offenders and/or their families. However, the sub group recognised a need for further member training on the subject and also advocate the use of various media channels, open to ESBC, to promote local Domestic Abuse services.
- 2.3. Outside of ESBC, members have spoken with Domestic Abuse service providers, Staffordshire Police and other localised partners. Whilst these meetings and interviews provided reassurance on the provision of services concerns have been raised regarding the transition from district commissioned providers to the new pan Staffordshire service delivered by New Era (commissioned by the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner). New Era commenced operations in October 2018 and therefore their impact and success has been difficult to evaluate within the timescales of this review. Consequently, sub group members would like to maintain a rolling 12 month review to monitor the New Era contract to ensure it is delivering beneficial outcomes for East Staffordshire residents.

3. Background

- 3.1. The scrutiny review commenced on 20th March 2018 and consisted of the following sub-group Council Members: Cllr Denise Florence-Jukes (lead), Cllr Ray Faulkner, Cllr Lynn Shelton, Cllr Craig Jones, Cllr Shelagh McKiernan and Cllr Bernard Peters. Sub group members subsequently agreed on a scoping paper (see Appendix A) that focussed on understanding whether residents of the Borough are receiving the right level of care / support in relation to Domestic Abuse.
- 3.2. Investigation processes involved each Councillor researching a particular theme within the scoping paper with help from officers where required. The report set out below is a direct consequence of those findings.

4. Contribution to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1. Protecting and Strengthening Communities

5. Scrutiny Review of Domestic Abuse

- 5.1. **Statistical Background¹**

¹ All the data in this Section 5.1 has been taken from the following source:
[East Staffordshire Community Safety Strategic Assessment 2017](#)

5.1.1. Domestic Abuse is one of the strategic priorities for the East Staffordshire CSP. The Strategic Assessment 2017 summarises the reasons why this theme was selected as a priority as:

- “Domestic abuse is recognised as an under-reported issue, with much abuse hidden. The recent ‘Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment’ identified that Police reported crimes and incidents only reveal part of the picture - it is estimated that approximately 45% of all domestic abuse is ‘known’ or visible, whilst the remainder is hidden. East Staffordshire has seen an increasing trend in domestic abuse incidents over the last five years. While this is not necessarily a negative trend (confidence in reporting meaning that victims are not suffering in silence), it has an impact on the CSP’s ability to manage the issue from a resourcing perspective”.

5.1.2. The UK government’s definition of domestic violence is ‘any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, 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. Approximately half of domestic abuse-related crimes that are recorded by the police do not result in an arrest and a large proportion have evidential difficulties in proceeding with prosecution. Nationally around 43% of domestic abuse incidents are criminal offences and these make up just under a third (32%) of all violent crime.

5.1.3. There are six wards which have rates above the England average. The following are the wards that are above the England average: Anglesey, Burton, Eton Park, Horninglow, Shobnall and Stapenhill which are also the wards which experience the highest levels of deprivation in East Staffordshire.

5.1.4. There were 965 domestic violent crimes in 2016/7 in East Staffordshire. This is a rate of 8.3 per 1,000 population which is statistically above the England average (6.4). Within the force area East Staffordshire ranks fifth highest out of the nine CSP areas. It has increased since last year (161 more crimes) and this was a statistically higher change. The current rate is statistically higher than five years ago.

5.1.5. The number of domestic violent crimes has been rising quickly since 2012, and continues to rise each year. The year-on-year increase in reported incidents is at least partially likely to be due to improved recording practices, greater awareness of domestic abuse and changes to crime recording. The trend is similar to the national picture.

5.2. The Council’s Role

5.2.1 East Staffordshire Borough Council has a number of documents, which are linked to the issue of Domestic Abuse, that detail the Council’s responsibilities. These are:

- 5.2.1.1 Domestic Abuse Work Place Policy: East Staffordshire Borough Council has developed this Domestic Abuse Policy, which is adapted from Staffordshire Women’s Aid and Police and Crime Commissioner’s work place policy. **The policy ensures that**

victims of domestic abuse are aware of the support that is available within the organisation whilst providing guidance to Line Managers / HR.

- 5.2.1.3 Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk of Abuse and Neglect Policy and Procedure: East Staffordshire Borough Council has both a moral and legal obligation to ensure a duty of care for children and adults across its services. **The purpose of this policy and its associated procedures is to help protect all children and adults that come into contact with the Council, as well as to protect staff, elected members and volunteers.**
- 5.2.1.4 These policies were reviewed by Cllr McKiernan and Cllr C Jones, and were confirmed as being primarily aimed at staff and employees.
- 5.2.2 A key area of contact between the Council and people affected by DA is in the Council's Housing and Homelessness function. As such Cllr Florence-Jukes met with the Manager of East Staffordshire Borough Council's Housing Options team to understand the Council's policy and procedures.
- 5.2.3 This discussion provided detailed insight into what is available to victims or perpetrators of DA who present as homeless to the Council in respect of housing and accommodation. It was established that DA would categorise as being in the most elite group the Council offers in terms of housing priority i.e. Band 1 of 4. While it is not necessarily an automatic priority need, the Council do treat it as such.
- 5.2.4 Assessment of need is undertaken in line with the [Homelessness Code of Guidance](#), which contains a chapter specifically relating to DA.
- 5.2.5 The discussion also established that the Council has properties that can be used as temporary accommodation for anyone eligible, and that relevant training is delivered to staff on a regular basis which features issues relating DA. However, these properties tend not be utilised by those fleeing from Domestic Abuse as these individuals/families access the refuge network which is expansive.
- 5.2.6 In addition to the statistical background taken from the Strategic Assessment as referred to in paragraph 5.1, the Council's Housing options Team have provided statistics to help further understand the local context. This can be seen in full in **Appendix 2**, and shows information relating to clients accessing the Council's Homelessness service for whom a decision was made where the reason for homelessness was stated as being Domestic Abuse.
- 5.2.7 Furthermore, as part of the Council's contribution to tackling Domestic Abuse, ESBC provide fortnightly information to the MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) on victims, offenders and locations which aims to reduce Domestic Abuse incidents and repeat abuse. The MARAC is a fortnightly, Police chaired, multi-agency information sharing forum which determines the desired course of action, based on shared information, for the protection of victims and their families. Additionally the

forum determines whether the alleged perpetrator poses a significant risk to any particular individual or to the general community.

5.3 Policy Implementation

- 5.3.1 It has been established all frontline staff undergo relevant safeguarding training, and will sign-post to the relevant organisation (for example the Police) where a potential issue is identified. They will also refer any issues arising in a safeguarding context to Council's designated safeguarding officer.
- 5.3.2 The designated safeguarding officer confirmed that there have been no instances at least over the past 18 months where it has been necessary for staff to raise a safeguarding concern in relation to Domestic Abuse.
- 5.3.3 Building on Cllr Florence-Jukes' conversation with the Housing Options / Homelessness service and the analysis of the policies by Cllr McKiernan and Cllr C Jones, a meeting was held with frontline staff most likely to come into contact with residents affected by DA i.e. Customer Contacts, Revenues & Benefits and Housing Options staff operating from the Customer Service Centre (CSC) in Burton upon Trent. The meeting also comprised a site visit around the CSC to see the newly refurbished facility.
- 5.3.4 Throughout the discussion number of example scenarios were discussed in relation to people visiting the CSC and reassurance was provided by the front-line officers regarding the questions posed by Cllr McKiernan and Cllr Jones. It was demonstrated that the Council works closely with the Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) funded by the Police and Staffordshire County Council.
- 5.3.5 It was noted that the CSC has appropriate facilities, particularly following its recent refurbishment providing additional and adequate privacy for enquiries that are potentially confidential as well as being of a sensitive nature. Having the range of relevant teams working alongside each other at the CSC also demonstrated added value in the service showing joined-up working and the sharing of experience and expertise in order to deal with customers' enquiries appropriately.
- 5.3.6 The wide range of training available to the staff was also noted, including welfare reform; relevant legislation; interviewing techniques; identifying fraud; and answering queries with compassion.
- 5.3.7 It was also noted that the Revenues, Benefits and Customer Contacts Manager has three direct reports within the organisation that are fully trained Mental Health First Aiders, which is beneficial in supporting customers appropriately through relevant enquiries to the CSC.

5.4 Partners (Internal and External)

Staffordshire Police

- 5.4.1 Cllr Florence-Jukes recently met with Chief Inspector Jason Nadine. As incidents of DA. It was established that the attending officer is responsible for completing a risk assessment for victims and / or children present. A

numbers of factors are taken into account by police at the scene. The response to 30 questions on the officer's handheld computer determines if a referral is made to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) team. A score of 14 and above is the threshold for a referral.

5.4.2 The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent MASH is a partnership between seven key public sector organisations, covering Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, who work together with the aim of improving safeguarding outcomes for children, adults with care and support needs and those people involved in serious domestic abuse situations. The seven MASH Agencies are:

- Staffordshire County Council
- Stoke-on-Trent City Council
- Staffordshire Police
- Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Partnership NHS Trust
- National Probation Service
- North Staffordshire Combined Mental Health Trust
- South Staffordshire and Shropshire (Mental Health) Foundation Trust

5.4.3 The MASH is organised for agencies to share information associated with a family or household after an incident has occurred or a referral has been received. This information will then inform the decision-making of the referral owning agency, so that this decision is made in a more informed way than if only single-agency information were available.

Pathway Project / New Era Service

5.4.4 Cllr Florence-Jukes also recently met with Kathy Coe who is CEO of the Pathway Project and one of her staff. The Pathway project is a registered charity who get funding from a variety of sources. It works to support adults, young people and children, who are experiencing or are affected by Domestic Abuse. Pathway aim to provide a range of services, meeting the needs of abused adults and children, in a caring environment. The contract is facilitated by the OPCC and funded by them, Staffordshire County Council and Stoke City Council. They also receive funding from other sources such as the Lottery. Pathway provided services for the victims of DA, their children and have previously attempted to facilitate perpetrator programmes but with limited success.

5.4.5 However during the course of this review the sub-group were made aware that Pathway's contract in Staffordshire has not been renewed and that the service will be transferring to a new provider. As of 1st October 2018 "New Era" is the new holistic DA service operating across Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent, provided by Victim Support (an independent charity dedicated to supporting victims of crime and traumatic incidents).

5.4.6 New Era aims to end relationship abuse through a wide range of individual and group support for adults, children and young people. New Era provides support services for victims as well as service for perpetrators wanting to change their behaviour:

- **Perpetrators:** Anyone that's displaying unhealthy or abusive behaviour within their relationship and wants to change this can access help from New Era. New Era Perpetrator services can also help children under 16 years of age who need help with relationship based behaviour or are in need of one to one guidance around healthy relationships. Perpetrator services are offered by the Staffordshire & West Midlands Community Rehabilitation Company; the Reducing Re-Offending Partnership (RRP) working across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.
- **Victims:** 24-hours a day, 7-days a week, specialised help is available for all victims. The service also provides a webchat facility. Specially trained New Era staff are able to help whether or not a report has been made to the police. Operating across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, victim services are provided by Victim Support and are available for everyone, with safety and recovery prioritised.

5.4.7 The intention is for Members to meet the new providers to gain full detail of the services they intend to supply and to discuss the transition of the service between the two providers. Furthermore, due to this service provision being new it is recommended that New Era are scrutinised over the forthcoming months to ensure delivery is suitable and reflective of the needs of the borough.

Domestic and Sexual Abuse Forum

5.4.8 Cllr Florence-Jukes was invited to join the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Forum and has attended a number of meetings. The forum is a vehicle for multi-agency working to raise awareness of and promote DA services. It covers the Lichfield, Tamworth and East Staffs areas. This is useful forum for sharing ideas and bringing a whole host of stakeholders together. There were examples of some positive work going on in other Boroughs. The forum will continue to meet in the future with ESBC providing a dedicated marketing input to help raise awareness amongst residents.

Shelters

5.4.9 As part of the review research Cllr McKiernan visited Derby Women's Centre and reported back on what is offered to women. Anecdotal evidence suggests it is accessed by people from the East Staffordshire area, but they were unable to provide statistics to support this statement. The Centre is run with some help from Derby City Council, who gave them the building. The service is reliant on volunteers at present.

5.4.10 They have links with other organisations that provide sessions in the area, for example the Freedom Programme which aims to empower women in domestic abuse situations.

Education

5.4.11 Within education there is no specific elements that focus on Domestic Abuse. However, a number of educational packages provide young

people with advice on healthy relationships such as PSHE, Chelsea's choice and the Values v Violence workbooks.

Member training

5.4.12 Throughout the process of researching this review it has become apparent that members require further understanding of the working practices, structures, responsibilities and commissioning arrangements around Domestic Abuse. Subsequently, it is recommended that Domestic Abuse services becomes an identified specific subject within any future member inductions.

5.5 Summary: What this Means in an East Staffordshire Context, and Areas for Future Consideration

5.5.1 The process of this review has highlighted that ESBC has comprehensive policies and procedures for addressing issues and supporting victims and/or offenders to access specialised provision. Furthermore, with a wide variety of media channels open to ESBC there is the scope to promote and raise awareness of Domestic Abuse services. This could be through traditional advertising mediums such as posters or leaflets but also via digital formats like social media or websites.

5.5.2 However, this is set against a back drop of uncertainty with the introduction of new provider (New Era) from October 2018. Subsequently, there is a role for ESBC to monitor contract delivery within the borough and feedback any issues to the OPCC to ensure performance is adhered to. Therefore, it is recommended that the scrutiny sub group continue to scrutinise the provision of this new service over the forthcoming 12 months via a rolling review.

5.5.3 A further uncertainty that Members also identified as an area of future interest is to research what impact the roll out of Universal Credit to the Borough may have, if any, on people affected by DA. This should be included as an area for investigation in any future review relating to Universal Credit.

6. Financial Implications

6.1. There are no financial issues arising from this report.

7. Background Papers

7.1. None.

8. Equalities and Health

8.1. **Equality impacts:** The subject of this Report is not a policy, strategy, function or service that is new or being revised. An equality and health impact assessment is not required.

8.2. **Health impacts:** The outcome of the health screening question does not require a full Health Impact Assessment to be completed.

9. Human Rights

9.1. There are no Human Rights issues arising from this Report.

10. Sustainability (including climate change and change adaptation measures)

10.1. Does the proposal result in an overall positive effect in terms of sustainability (including climate change and change adaptation measures) **N/A**

11. Recommendations

11.1 The scrutiny subgroup maintain an overview of the New Era service provision to provide reassurance to members that the contract is being delivered effectively within the borough.

11.2 The induction programme for new members has Domestic Abuse as a specific standalone subject.

11.3 ESBC promote Domestic Abuse services through the variety of media channels that are open to the Council to help raise public awareness.

12. Appendices

12.1. Appendix A - Review Scoping Paper

12.2. Appendix B - Homelessness Statistics

Appendix A - Scoping Paper

Economic Growth, Communities and Health Scrutiny Committee

Review Scoping Document

Sub-group Review Subject

Domestic Abuse (DA)

Date Review Commenced

20th March 2018

Sub-group Members

Cllr D Florence-Jukes (Lead)

Cllr S McKiernan

Cllr R Faulkner

Cllr L Shelton

Cllr C Jones

Cllr B Peters

Background

It was agreed at the EGCH Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 20th September 2017 that a sub-group consisting of the Committee Members listed above be established to review Domestic Abuse. An initial sub-group meeting was held on 20th March 2018 to identify a specific scope for the review as collated by the sub-group.

Scope

This document has been compiled in order to provide a focus for this review, with the overarching objective of understanding whether residents of the Borough are receiving the right level of care / support in relation to Domestic Abuse (DA), and ensuring that people who are affected by DA know where to go.

Please note that the information listed is not exhaustive and the sub-group is not limited to answering only the questions contained within this scoping paper, however additional considerations should be focussed within the general scope of the topic identified for review.

Key Considerations

1) What Background Information is Available?

- a) What is the Council's role in dealing with DA?
- b) Does it have a policy, and is it fit for purpose?
- c) What crossover is there between Staffordshire County Council and East Staffordshire Borough Council?
- d) What is the role of the OPCC in relation to DA (for example, funding)?
- e) Is there any information in the Strategic Assessment that can inform / support this review?
- f) Is there any other statistical or background information (local, national or international) that can inform / support the review (for example the impact of football tournaments on levels of DA)?
- g) Do demographics (for example, deprivation, gender, ethnicity etc) have an influence on DA?
- h) Are there any government policies that have an influence on DA (for example relating to Universal Credit / Housing Benefit)?

2) Understanding the Council's and its Partners' Roles in Relation to Housing and DA

- a) What is the Council's role in relation to Housing in a DA context?
- b) What DA refuges are available?
- c) What provision do Trent and Dove Housing have in a DA context?
- d) Can victims only be supported once the perpetrator has been charged?
- e) Is there currently any provision for housing exchanges to escape DA?
- f) Success of the pilot scheme working with offenders?
- g) What is the role of the Building Resilient Families and Communities programme in relation to DA?

3) Understanding the Influence of Commissioning

- a) What is the influence of commissioning?
- b) What is being delivered specifically in East Staffordshire under the pan-Staffordshire approach?

4) Understanding the Victim Pathway

- a) Where are people in domestic distress joining the victim pathway (for example, Police, GPs etc)?
- b) What is the end-to-end victim pathway?
- c) What private and / or third sector organisations are operating in the area (for example the Pathway project)?
- d) What is the role of private and / or third sector organisations operating in the area?
- e) Are partners (for example Health partners) acting upon what they see?

5) Offender Profiling

- a) Do partners utilise offender profiling?
- b) What assistance is available for offenders when entering the criminal justice system?

6) MARAC Forum

- a) As the MARAC Forum are conducting a review of the process, is it possible to share best practice from the review?
- b) Is there anything that can be learned from the pilot scheme in Tamworth?

7) Understanding the role of educational establishments in relation to DA

- a) What influence do educational establishments such as schools and colleges have in relation to DA?
- b) Is education provided on what is an acceptable relationship?

Key Stakeholders

Police
Staffordshire County Council
Trent & Dove
Educational Establishments
Local Voluntary Services

Appendix B - Homelessness Statistics

<u>Table 1 - All clients for whom a decision was made</u> <i>where reason for homelessness was domestic violence</i>	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need	4	13	19	14	23	18
Eligible, homeless and in priority need, but intentionally so					1	
Eligible, homeless but not in priority need	2	3	2	3		
Eligible, but not homeless	2	1	2	3		5
Ineligible households			1			1
Withdrawn - no further contact	1	2	1		1	5
Cancelled		1			4	5
Found suitable alternative accommodation	1	6	4	8	5	4
Other			1			1
Grand Total	10	26	30	28	34	39

<u>Table 2 - Number of clients who were pregnant</u> <i>of those in Table 1</i>	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need					1	2
Eligible, homeless and in priority need, but intentionally so						
Eligible, homeless but not in priority need						
Eligible, but not homeless			1			
Ineligible households			1			
Withdrawn - no further contact						
Cancelled						
Found suitable alternative accommodation						
Other						
Grand Total			2		1	2

Table 3 - Number of Women <i>of those in Table 1</i>	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need	4	12	18	12	22	16
Eligible, homeless and in priority need, but intentionally so					1	
Eligible, homeless but not in priority need	1	1	2	1		
Eligible, but not homeless	2	1	2	2		3
Ineligible households			1			1
Withdrawn - no further contact	1	2	1		1	5
Cancelled		1			4	5
Found suitable alternative accommodation	1	5	3	5	5	3
Other			1			1
Grand Total	9	22	28	20	33	34

Table 4 - Number of Men <i>of those in Table 1</i>	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need		1	1	2	1	2
Eligible, homeless and in priority need, but intentionally so						
Eligible, homeless but not in priority need	1	2		2		
Eligible, but not homeless				1		2
Ineligible households						
Withdrawn - no further contact						
Cancelled						
Found suitable alternative accommodation		1	1	3		1
Other						
Grand Total	1	4	2	8	1	5

Table 5 - Number of Dependants <i>of those in Table 1</i>	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need						
0		4	4	4	8	9
1	1	4	10	7	9	6
2	1	4	1	2	3	2
3			4	1	3	
4	1					1
5	1	1				
Eligible, homeless and in priority need, but intentionally so						
0					1	
Eligible, homeless but not in priority need						
0	2	3	2	3		
Eligible, but not homeless						
0			1	1		5
1	2		1			
3				2		
4		1				
Ineligible households						
0			1			
2						1
Withdrawn - no further contact						
0	1		1			2
1		1				2
2		1			1	1
Cancelled						
0					2	
1					2	3
2		1				2
Found suitable alternative accommodation						
0		4	3	5	1	2
1		2		1	2	1
2			1	2		1
3	1				1	
4					1	
Other						
0						1
3			1			
Grand Total	10	26	30	28	34	39

<u>Table 6 - Time from Full Duty Decision to accepted Offer and receipt of keys under the Allocation Scheme</u> <i>Only those with a full duty decision who were made an offer under the Allocation Scheme</i>	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
	<i>Year of Full Duty Decision</i>					
Average Wait in Days	118	71	64	81	87	76