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| MEETING: | Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee |
| DATE: | Tuesday, 19 January 2016 |
| TIME: | 2.00 pm |
| VENUE: | Council Chamber, Barnsley Town Hall |

MINUTES

Present

Councillors Worton (Chair), G. Carr, Frost, Hampson, Millner, Pourali, Saunders and C. Wraith MBE together with co-opted member Ms K. Morritt

13. Apologies for Absence - Parent Governor Representatives

There were no apologies received in accordance with Regulation 7 (6) of the Parent Governor Representatives (England) Regulations 2001.

14. Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

Cllr Pourali declared an interest that she is currently aware of Domestic Violence services undertaking consultation with hard to reach communities.

15. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Councillor Wraith asked if the Action Points from the previous meeting had been addressed and was advised that the services are aware of the actions but they would need be implemented on an on-going basis, which the committee can monitor and follow-up.

Following this, the minutes were agreed.

16. Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence in Barnsley

The Chair welcomed the following experts to the meeting, which included:

- Jayne Hellowell, Head of Locality Commissioning and Healthier Communities, BMBC
- Jennie Millner, Service Manager, Commissioning and Market Development, BMBC
- Colin Brotherston, Hate and Hidden Crime Officer, BMBC
- Lydia Lynskey, Temporary Chief Inspector, Safeguarding Adult Team, South Yorkshire Police
- Deborah Mahmood, Detective Chief Inspector, South Yorkshire Police
- Sue Stokes, Pathways Service Manager
- Wendy Lowder, Interim Executive Director, Communities, BMBC
- Dorne Kanareck, Interim Service Director, Communities, BMBC
- Mel John - Ross, Service Director, Children's Social Care and Safeguarding, BMBC
- Cllr Margaret Bruff, Cabinet Spokesperson - People (Safeguarding) BMBC
- Cllr Jenny Platts, Cabinet Spokesperson - Communities, BMBC

W Lowder gave an introduction to this area of work and the reports, explaining its importance and sensitivity, which is approached with zero tolerance. W Lowder highlighted that the number of representatives present demonstrated the extensive partnership working which has contributed to all the work that has been undertaken.

Members proceeded to ask the following questions:

- i) How do we ensure services are easily accessible to the public and are there issues with the under reporting of incidents?

The group were advised nationally there is an under reporting of incidents due to the sensitive nature of the subject, however, support is available locally to victims through the Pathways project. Their services are located in two sites, including a successful independent group, which helps a diverse range of people.

We have an independent advisory group with representatives from different areas of our community including those from minorities who we work with to understand barriers regarding reporting. We have seen an increase in the reporting of domestic violence (DV) to South Yorkshire Police (SYP) and will be undertaking some dip sampling of victims to understand how we can learn from them regarding encouraging reporting.

- ii) How will we ensure service user involvement helps both victims and perpetrators and what can be done if perpetrators don't engage?

Members were advised, shortly a group of students from Sheffield Hallam University will be assisting SYP in evaluating the 'victim's journey' from the initial reporting of the incident, until the case is closed. This will provide essential information as to how successful the police are in responding to the needs of the victim.

SYP are also working with the perpetrator programme being trialled in Doncaster and if this shows to be successful will consider implementing it in other areas including Barnsley.

SYP hope to use a conditional caution to get people to take part in perpetrator programmes, otherwise this would need to go through the courts. However, it was highlighted that when people attend programmes voluntarily there are more successful outcomes.

- iii) How many successful convictions have there been in the borough for incidents of DV over the last 12 months?

The group were advised they would need to obtain these figures from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and will then arrange for them to be forwarded to the committee. In Barnsley 80% of cases that go to court are successful in obtaining a conviction which is comparable to the rest of the UK.

- iv) Do we have instances of victims not wanting to give evidence in court?

The group were advised this happens frequently and victims often retract statements; this increasingly happens the longer it takes to take a case through the courts. The

police do have a process to undertake victimless prosecutions and pursue prevention orders.

It was highlighted that work is focused on high risk DV and rape cases. Officers are conscious of the impact on victims and try to work with them to reassure them and deal with the issues that arise.

- v) What support is in place to deal with the needs of the diverse communities within the borough?

Members were advised the Pathways service has been operating in the Borough for 21 years and has strong links with the police, social services and a number of other statutory and non-statutory agencies in order to help people across the Borough. Currently funding is provided by the Council and the Big Lottery Fund.

A member recommended that more needs to be done about transgender and other communities where DV is hidden as it is not just ethnic minorities who suffer from DV.

- vi) How will you ensure needs assessment, strategies and plans are effective in preventing and supporting those who currently or have previously experienced domestic abuse?

Members were advised this information will be pulled together over the next 3-4 months using the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and Joint Strategic Intelligence Assessment (JSIA) so that relevant data is gathered to map what support is currently available, decide where there may be gaps in service provision and develop appropriate plans to put support in place.

- vii) In paragraph 5.5 of the report, there is no evidence of a representative on the partnership from Housing Associations or private sector landlords?

The service confirmed this was correct but that they would take this back to the Strategic Housing Service and address this.

- viii) What support do you get from Berneslai Homes in relation to DV incidents?

Members were advised the services have an excellent relationship with Berneslai Homes who provide support and prioritise service user needs in relation to DV.

- ix) Where there's evidence of anti-social behaviour in the home this can have serious consequences for a child in adult life; what investigations are carried out and where would a child go for help?

The committee were advised initially a child may speak to someone they trust such as a relative or a teacher. Where a child discloses this information to someone from an organisation or the police attend an incident then this information is passed to Children's Social Care. Where an incident occurs we would investigate concerns and undertake an assessment of the child on whether an intervention was needed.

- x) Is there a specific contact for children to ring locally and is this promoted in schools?

Members were advised there is no dedicated local telephone number; however, when a child contacts a national children's charity such as ChildLine or the NSPCC, Children's Services in Barnsley will be notified. A lot of work is done in schools and in the community to promote and advertise where people can turn to for help and support in relation to a number of issues including domestic abuse.

The Pathways service runs a women's aid programme in primary schools for 7 to 11 year olds. It explains about domestic abuse, that everyone has the right to be safe and also talks about prevention including providing 3 specific contacts. We also have a course for mums on how DV impacts on their parenting. We currently have 70 children waiting to attend the 'Helping Hands' programme. Previously it has been difficult to engage with schools however this is now changing and through word of mouth we are being contacted by headteachers to provide programmes.

xi) Should an all member information briefing be held on DV including available services and contacts?

The service advised they would consider a specific session for members in relation to domestic abuse and how they would be best to disseminate this information. Through the Barnsley Safeguarding Adults Board, multi agency training is available on domestic abuse, this incorporates identifying the signs, who to contact as well as guidance. The service advised that the key is to responding at the earliest point and publicising where people can get help.

xii) Are agencies working together effectively on DV and anti-social behaviour (ASB) incidents?

The group were advised we have seen an increase in ASB, particularly amongst youths. All police officers are trained in identifying the signs of DV and they know which agencies to sign-post to. If the police attend an incident they work with and refer to other agencies as appropriate. SYP recently restructured and have two ASB Officers who work closely with the community intervention team and other partnership agencies. This is working effectively as it brings expertise together of all the different agencies and we are looking to expand this.

A witness advised that as Members undertake work on their Area Councils and including school 'check and challenge' sessions, it would be a good time for them to ask schools about what they are doing regarding DV.

SYP advised they had not had a schools officer for sometime, however since June 2015 they have 3 officers who go round schools and provide information on a range of issues including DV, hate crime and bullying etc.

xiii) Have there been improvements within the last 5 years in how domestic abuse is managed within the borough?

Members were advised we have highly skilled people across the Barnsley community and a lot has happened over the last 5 years with more investment being made, for example the Police Crime Commissioner has funded posts. There is also a strategy in place in Barnsley for the first time to address DV. Victims of domestic violence are

being supported better, as well as help being provided by the Council to the voluntary sector. The commissioning of further services will contribute to further improvements.

In the last 5 years we have however lacked preventative measures in relation to DV as we need to make it clear it is unacceptable. Perpetrators need to know it is wrong but they also need to know there is help available. There was going to be a pilot in Barnsley regarding a therapy intervention for perpetrators, however at the time unfortunately we were unable to secure funding for this.

xiv) Are resources being targeted to the more deprived areas in relation to promoting the issue of DV?

The group were advised a two pronged approach is being used and we're currently in a period of transition. We provide a universal offer across the borough and are currently undertaking work using data to identify the areas where we need to specifically target more resources; however this work is not yet complete.

xv) Are teenage boys able to stay at Judith House with their mother as this was not possible a few years ago?

The committee were advised this property is managed by the Riverside Housing Group and clarification would be needed from them as to whether there has been any change to the residency arrangements. Floating support is available to complement the work being done at Judith House to support people in a home where they're not in a refuge.

xvi) Do you have to prove abuse before you get residency at Judith House, as this may be difficult if this is financial and not physical?

Members were advised each case is assessed on its own merit; therefore you don't necessarily have to have piles of evidence such as lots of registered phone calls to the police. Pathways advised they work with and provide support to victims who may want to go to a refuge.

xvii) What procedures are in place to identify cases of repeat offending?

The group were advised by the police that their systems will monitor and identify a repeat victim and this will be fed to the officer dealing with the case. For the most serious cases, this is fed to the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) where all agencies come together to devise a plan to deal with the case and mitigate risks. Underpinning this work, the police also hold daily management meetings where DV incidents are discussed and monitored. Where appropriate we will refer to other agencies such as Pathways.

xviii) Is 'Sarah's Law' recognised within Barnsley and if so, how often is it used?

Members were advised that it is; people can formally ask the police to check their records to see if someone with access to a child has a record for child sexual offences. When appropriate, action will be taken to safeguard individuals. We don't have data to hand on the specific number of calls however incidents go through the

'101' number to the main control room and if an immediate response is needed, it is actioned.

xix) What is in place to help those who become perpetrators as a result of learned behaviours?

The group were advised the Pathways perpetrator programme requires perpetrators to take some responsibility for their abusive behaviour. They undertook a survey last year which identified that 60% of perpetrators had witnessed incidents of DV as a child; this could have either been their father or mother.

xx) What are the 3 main causes of DV in Barnsley?

The group were advised that Barnsley is no different to other places in terms of DV. Periods of celebration, where there could be the presence of alcohol can be an influencing factor, although it is not an 'exact science'. The reasons for DV can be complicated, but ultimately it is the control over another person, usually being a male over a female. It very rarely starts as violence; it normally starts with controlling another person, derogatory comments, wearing them down, having arguments and then someone becoming aggressive and then violent. We need to help people to know how to negotiate within relationships and send the message that it is unacceptable to treat them in such ways. It was highlighted that domestic abuse isn't just about violence; some people never get physically hit but are subject to psychological abuse which can be even more damaging.

xxi) Where do we need to focus resources to confront the causes of DV?

The group were advised the review will help us to identify where we need to focus resources, however, depending on the outcome we will not necessarily be able to tackle all of them; the key is to prevent DV. The causes can be complex and numerous, however the earlier the intervention, the better. It was highlighted that domestic abuse is not just about physical violence, but is often about emotional/psychological abuse which can be far more damaging.

xxii) Berneslai Homes have a system where they flag up tenants where it is not safe to visit them alone; is this information shared with the Safeguarding Boards?

The committee were advised Berneslai Homes report any incidents to the MARAC and community safety and have a good relationship with all the agencies involved.

xxiii) Why are there no referrals from Berneslai Homes to Barnsley Adult Safeguarding Board as was evident in the report at the previous meetings?

The group were advised that Berneslai Homes do make notifications; however these get referred through the police. If an incident was not dealt with, it would be referred to the Barnsley Safeguarding Adults Board.

xxiv) What are the key areas for development of this work and how will this be achieved?

A review is currently taking place to identify if there any gaps in services and whether there are other things which need to be commissioned. This review is being undertaken with other services, such as homelessness, as a high percentage of DV victims present as homeless. This review will help to ensure services work together effectively and that funding is distributed fairly.

xxv) Is there a link between a lack of access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and DV?

The group were advised there has been a review of Governance within the Communities Directorate to ensure that there is joint work amongst boards and their sub-groups to share intelligence and ensure that appropriate actions can be taken in relation to service provision.

The Chair thanked all the experts for their attendance and helpful contribution and declared the meeting closed.

Action Points

- 1) Service to provide information to the committee from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) on the number of successful prosecutions for domestic violence in the borough over the last 12 months.
- 2) Service to consider the needs of all minority communities where DV is hidden, for example amongst the gay, lesbian and transgender community.
- 3) Service to liaise with Strategic Housing and seek representation on the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership in relation to Housing Associations and Private Sector Landlords.
- 4) Service to consider holding a session for Members on Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse so they are aware of relevant services and contact information.
- 5) Service to clarify to the committee whether teenage boys can live with their mother whilst they are resident at Judith House?
- 6) Service to re-visit their work with Berneslai Homes with regards to domestic abuse and sexual violence as part of their review.