

<b>MEETING:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Healthy Barnsley Workstream
<b>DATE:</b>	Tuesday 26 March 2024
<b>TIME:</b>	2.00 pm
<b>VENUE:</b>	Council Chamber, Barnsley Town Hall

## MINUTES

### Present

Councillors Ennis OBE (Chair), Barnard, Bellamy, Booker, Bowser, Clarke, Eastwood, Fielding, Green, Hayward, Lodge, McCarthy, Morrell, Osborne, Sheard and Tattersall

### 32 Apologies for Absence - Parent Governor Representatives

Apologies for absence were received from Ms E Iles in accordance with Regulation 7(6) of the Parent Governor Representatives (England) Regulations 2001.

### 33 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

Councillor Bellamy declared a non pecuniary interest as a member of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Councillor Eastwood declared a non pecuniary interest as a member of the Corporate Parenting Panel and Fostering Panel.

Councillor Lodge declared a non pecuniary interest as an Adviser in an organisation that offers healthy relationship advice and support.

Councillor Sheard declared a non pecuniary interest as Cabinet Support Member for Public Health and Communities.

Councillor Tattersall declared a non pecuniary interest as a member on the Berneslai Homes Board.

### 34 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2024 were received.

### 35 Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-27

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:

- Anna Hartley, Executive Director Public Health and Communities, Barnsley Council
- Jayne Hellowell, Head of Commissioning – Healthier Communities, Barnsley Council
- Phil Hollingsworth, Service Director Communities, Barnsley Council
- Alice Barker-Milner, Policy Officer, Healthier Communities, Barnsley Council

- Amy Hoyle, Contracts and Relationship Officer, Healthier Communities, Barnsley Council
- Councillor Wendy Cain, Cabinet Spokesperson Public Health and Communities, Barnsley Council
- Sarah Hill, Chief Executive, Independent Domestic Abuse Services (IDAS)
- Detective Inspector Helen Hughes, South Yorkshire Police (SYP)
- Temporary Detective Chief Inspector Nat Humphries, South Yorkshire Police (SYP)
- Kevin Stevens, Head of Service Childrens Social Care and Safeguarding, Barnsley Council
- Rachel Todd, Team Leader Housing and Triage, Safer Communities, Barnsley Council
- Rosemary Clewer, Senior Commissioning Manager, Healthier Communities, Barnsley Council

Jayne Hellowell and Alice Barker-Milner provided members with an overview of the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-27.

In response to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, a needs assessment had identified some key gaps in service provision due to domestic abuse in Barnsley becoming more complex and diverse. These gaps included suitable housing, specialist support to children and young people and skilled work with perpetrators. The Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2027 was established to address these gaps and outlined the four main priorities of the Strategy, the current position and achievements of the service provision and future plans and challenges that the service provision faced.

The four priorities of the Domestic Abuse Strategy were outlined:

- Providing victims and survivors with the right support
- Preventing domestic abuse
- Providing strong multi-agency support
- Holding perpetrators to account and supporting them to change their behaviour

Members were made aware that additional funding had been received from the Department of Levelling up of £600,000 per year which had enabled new services to be put in place. It was noted however that this was not guaranteed every year which would result in the service returning to core funding. Members were informed that core funding would be able to support critical services such as support services with IDAS.

Members were informed of a new scheme 'Help Out Barnsley' which was driven by a need for storage facilities for victims who have had to flee their homes with nowhere to place their belongings.

In the ensuing discussion and in response to detailed questioning and challenge, the following matters were highlighted: -

Members were informed that families with teenage sons who would not be able to be housed in a refuge would be offered provision through other avenues. Provisions on offer would initially be through bed and breakfast accommodation and following

assessment they would be placed appropriately such as refuge, self contained or supported accommodation.

IDAS has plans to develop properties to accommodate people who cannot access the women's refuge due to more complicated needs. Length of time staying in the safe houses or refuges varied but could be anything up to 18 months, there was a desire to cut this time down to around 6 months by putting pathways in place in collaboration with the Council and other Partners. It was acknowledged that there were a number of complexities to getting people set up in the correct housing environment such as waiting lists for houses, the higher cost of private rented housing and also people being caught up in Tenancy Laws with their former homes.

Members heard how nationally due to demand in refuge accommodation around 65% of women who need refuge would not be able to find space in one. Local housing partners can accommodate people on an emergency basis until space becomes available in a refuge. If space is unavailable in the area, then there is the option to approach other local housing authorities.

Members were informed that Refuges across the UK charge rents for women but that most of the time these are paid through the housing benefit system as it was unlikely the people accessing these services would be able to work. There is an online system to find refuges and people are able to move out of the Barnsley area to find refuge and people are able to move into the Barnsley area if need be. There is a reciprocal arrangement with Sheffield for helping to find accommodation.

In relation to prosecutions, members were informed of non-crime incidents which were where there has been a report of abuse and following the police clarifying the facts of the incident, it could emerge as being an argument but it can be recorded on the South Yorkshire Police systems as an incident but is not classed as a crime. For a serious offence of assault, dependent on each case scenario, people can receive a sentence of around 3 to 4 years or longer if there is an accumulation of offenses. If victims do not wish to engage and press charges themselves then the Police are able to take the prosecution forward to the Crown Prosecution Service. The Police are able to prosecute based on evidence from a variety of sources such as body camera footage of first attending the callout, capturing any injuries sustained, the first victims account when they are in fear, the phone call to the police to report the crime, neighbours statements, CCTV footage and phone downloads. It was reported that there were a variety of reasons that victims may not complain such as fear for their family, the fear of losing their house and home that they have built together or they may not be financially secure to leave. They could also blame themselves for the behaviours of a partner, they could have been isolated from friends and family so feel they have nowhere to go. It was noted that every situation had its own complexities and some traumatic life altering situations.

Restraining orders provide legal protection and extra measures to enable people to feel safer in their homes. A big part of supporting people includes installing alarms, extra locks on doors and windows and CCTV.

Councillors enquired as to what they could do to help. In answer to this they were informed that they could speak with residents out in the community and if anyone needed help refer them to IDAS who are able to provide the best support and are

able to link people up with key partners. Members were informed that they would receive information on how to refer people to IDAS.

The Safe and Together Model had been identified as a potential model to commission for Barnsley as it had successfully been used in other areas including Sheffield. Members were informed that previous models had focussed mostly on survivors whereas this model holds perpetrators to be accountable for their decisions. It also aligns services across the board to work with survivors to keep them with their families as children are often placed in care due to parental domestic abuse.

In terms of preventative work, the challenge as a society of violence against women and men was that sometimes it was seen as ok and normal. Work was being undertaken in schools and with the Youth Association in supporting young people to think about the language they use when it is inappropriate, or they are displaying signs of coercive control to minimise risk of future behaviours. It was important to work together to educate ourselves and others to live in a society where it is unacceptable. This would be by calling it out whether it is on social media or out in society in the constituencies and wards.

Members raised some worrying statistics around young people's views on what circumstances they would class as rape and abuse. It highlighted the extent of the work that is required to educate young people. It was reported that it is the responsibility of all organisations that come into contact with children and young people to get the message across, alongside schools and parents.

It was acknowledged that perpetrators are from all walks of life from lawyers to the unemployed and that there was no stereotype or criminal profile to go by in identifying abusers. Research into some homicides had indicated that substances including alcohol and/or drugs had a clear relationship and were prevalent in domestic abuse homicides although some homicides had been spontaneous with no history of abuse. Campaigns to reduce alcohol intake were held at specific times of year such as Christmas or at Football matches when people's drinking is increased.

Domestic violence was not just a case of someone being physically abused, it includes financial and coercive control and being isolated from family and friends amongst other things. If someone has a history of such behaviours and they are stored in the police databases, if an incident arises with a new partner Officers complete a dashboard which goes before an Independent Review Panel. They then make a decision as to whether this needs highlighting to the new victim as a need to know disclosure in order to hopefully prevent other offences.

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS and also known as Clare's Law) had recently been implemented which enables the Police to inform a victim or potential victim of their partner or ex partners previous abuse or violent offending. Thorough research is undertaken into the person requesting the information to ensure they are disclosing the information to the right eligible person and the request has to be completed within 28 days. It was confirmed to members that South Yorkshire Police were complying with Clare's Law.

Strong multi agency support is provided at Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC). This local partnership meets twice weekly and supports agencies in delivering the best outcomes for victims, particularly high risk domestic abuse victims who are vulnerable to serious harm or murder. The Barnsley Domestic Abuse Team within South Yorkshire Police dip sample cases that have been given a risk level of low, medium or high to ensure that they are filed satisfactorily and they are happy with the investigations and evidence that have lead to that rating. It was reported that if a victim stops reporting and disclosing incidents, and a pattern of behaviour had previously been seen, then some violence prevention initiatives are put in place such as unannounced visits to make sure they are not back in the relationship.

Hairdressers had received some training in were where to report concerning conversations to in order to signpost people to the right support service as they were seen as potentially somewhere that victims could go and speak safely. Stickers had been produced and sent out to businesses in the Borough such as hairdressers, football clubs and hospitals with QR codes on which directs straight to the IDAS website as a mechanism to reach people.

The money received from the Department for Levelling up is shared out to Council's based on a formula. If the additional money was to cease in future then the Service would have to rethink the model to target what was left of resources.

Members commented that some Area Councils had funded domestic abuse services within their own ward areas and queried whether they could join the group to feed their information into the main service. It was advised that this was a conversation to take forward outside the scrutiny meeting.

**RESOLVED:-**

- (i) that witnesses provide data on convictions rates;
- (ii) that witnesses liaise with Area Councils to discuss any commissioned activity at area level to ensure synergy;
- (iii) that witnesses provide mirror stickers and other materials that elected members can use to raise awareness within the community;
- (iv) that the witnesses be thanked for their attendance and contribution; and
- (v) that the report be noted.

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Chair