

## **RESPONSIVE SERVICES AND CUSTOMER CARE SCRUTINY PANEL**

### **POLICY REVIEW 2012/13: REDUCING RE-OFFENDING – DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**18 FEBRUARY 2013**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide the Scrutiny Panel with background information regarding the witnesses attending the Panel meeting on 18 February 2013.
- 1.2 The round table discussion at the Panel meeting will inform the evidence for the Scrutiny Panel's policy review for 2012/13 into Domestic Violence.

#### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 At its meeting on 14 January 2013, the Panel agreed the scope of the Policy Review into Domestic Violence.
- 2.2 The evidence taken at the meeting will contribute to the Terms of Reference for the policy review listed below:-
  - (a) To understand the extent of domestic violence in Sunderland and the approaches being taken to tackle this issue; and
  - (c) To examine how the Safer Sunderland Partnership, statutory bodies and other service providers in the city are supporting victims of domestic violence.

#### **3. WITNESSES**

- 3.1 The following witnesses will be in attendance at the Panel Meeting:-
  - (a) **Steve Eagles, Impact Family Services;**
  - (b) **Michelle Meldrum and Julie Lister, Gentoo** (information to be tabled at the meeting); **and**
  - (c) **Fiona McHale and Laura Rutter, Victim Support**

#### **4. IMPACT FAMILY SERVICES**

- 4.1 Impact Family Services is a local charity that works with children and families around issues of family breakdown. There are two bases in Sunderland, the head office at 36 West Sunnyside and a child contact centre, currently based at Pallion. It offers a range of services to support families where domestic violence is an issue.

##### ***Child Contact Centres***

- 4.2 These are a safe venue for children to meet a parent they no longer live with. In some cases where there has been domestic violence the centre would be used if mum wanted to promote contact or the families courts were ordering contact between dad/child. For higher risk cases, for example, where CAFCASS and/or family courts are involved it offers supervised contact whereby the session would be closely monitored and a report prepared to send back to the referrer, which helps them to address risk. The child contact centres are for private law cases only.

### ***Women's Support Worker***

- 4.3 A Support Worker works with women who are using the child contact centres when domestic violence has been an issue and need additional support.

### ***Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programme***

- 4.4 This runs in South Tyneside, but men from Sunderland are accepted, where they are going through the family courts for contact with their children and there has been domestic violence and CAFCASS are involved. The Judge or Magistrate will make a Contact Activity Order for the perpetrator to attend the South Tyneside Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme. The programme consists of 4 x one to one assessment, 4 x pre groupwork sessions; 6 x 4 week modules and 1 x 2 week module, totalling 34 weeks

### ***Family Mediation Service***

- 4.5 A family mediator acts as an impartial third party that help parents discuss arrangements for children post separation. In cases of domestic violence this would only go ahead if both parents wanted contact and the mediator felt that neither party was being coerced into attending or making agreements (both parents are seen separately before a decision about mediation is taken).

### ***Respect Young Peoples Programme***

- 4.6 This is a national pilot with Respect, an early intervention programme for young people aged between 11-14 years old who are showing signs of being violent within the family home. The pilot will commence in February 2013 and run to September 2015.

## **5. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

### ***Approach to Supporting Victims Of Domestic Violence***

- 5.1 Victim Support offers a free and confidential service to people who have experienced a crime and to their friends and family including:-

- Information
- Practical help
- Advocacy
- Emotional support

### ***A Risk Led Approach to Supporting Victims of Domestic Violence***

- 5.2 The CAADA-DASH (Coordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse - Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment) risk identification checklist form is completed for all domestic violence referrals received. The support offered depends on risk level:

- Standard risk – a core service;
- High risk – support to victims where no specialist service is available or the available service is unable to provide a service due to oversubscription; and
- Very high risk – if there is no specialist service, we will offer a holding service until one is available or we will refer back to the original referrer

### ***Staff and Volunteer Training***

- 5.3 Staff and Volunteers receive training as follows:

- Core crime - training (four days) and accreditation
- Serious crime – further training and accreditation
- Domestic violence training – now CAADA accredited

Standard risk training is four days and high risk training consists of four days as per standard risk plus one day safety planning training

### ***Referrals***

- 5.4 Referrals are made to Victim Support from:-

- Northumbria Police;
- Self referrals;
- Other agency referrals; and the
- Initial contact from Victim Support: Victim Care Unit

### ***Needs assessment***

- 5.5 Victim Support offers a gender sensitive service. Once contact is made, confidentiality is explained and a needs assessment is completed. This looks at:-

- Emotional support

- Practical help
- Security
- Information

At this point the CAADA-DASH is completed.

### ***Service Delivery***

5.6 Support is provided by a trained volunteer or staff member who will:-

- Signpost to other services such as Wearside Women in Need;
- Make the appropriate referrals to other agencies, for example – safeguarding referral, IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor/Advocate) service, MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference);
- Commission appropriate services;
- Provide safety planning informed by identified risks; and
- Develop victims in dealing with a crisis, safety when remaining in a relationship and safety where the victim wants to leave/has left the relationship.

5.7 Standard risk support is given in relation to needs identified. This will include contact by telephone or face to face. The risk is reviewed at every contact and CAADA-DASH reviewed at least every six to eight weeks. For high risk victims where there is no IDVA service available support is given in relation to needs identified as per standard risk. Additionally a CAADA Individual Safety and Support Plan is completed. For very high risk victims, a referral to MARAC and to an IDVA is made. If the IDVA service cannot meet demand of referrals, Victim Support offer a holding service.

## **6. RECOMMENDATION**

6.1 That Members note the information provided in advance of the Panel Meeting to be held on 18 February 2013.

---

**Contact Officer:** Helen Lancaster, Scrutiny Officer (0191 561 1233)  
[Helen.lancaster@sunderland.gov.uk](mailto:Helen.lancaster@sunderland.gov.uk)