

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

### **POLICY REVIEW 2012/13: DEFINITION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE – SCOPE**

**14 JANUARY 2013**

#### **1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to put forward proposals and seek agreement from the Panel in relation to the forthcoming policy review into domestic violence.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 Within the revised scrutiny arrangements the Scrutiny Committee does not undertake policy reviews of its own. Instead the Scrutiny Committee will commission the Lead Scrutiny Members and respective scrutiny panels to undertake two short and focused (or 'spotlight') policy reviews during 2012/13.
- 2.2 The Annual Scrutiny Conference was held at the Quayside Exchange on 17 May 2012. During the discussions a number of viable policy reviews were formulated for discussion by members of the Panel. At its meeting on 14 June 2012, following discussions regarding the Annual Work Programme, the Scrutiny Committee agreed to commission the the Responsive Services and Customer Care Lead Scrutiny Member and supporting Panel to undertake a review into Domestic Violence.

#### **3. The Scrutiny Review Process**

- 3.1 Scrutiny reviews will carry out a number of stages in undertaking and completing a review. The stages broadly are:

<b>Stage 1 Scope</b>	The initial stage of the review identifies the background, issues, potential outcomes and timetable for the review.
<b>Stage 2 Investigate</b>	The Committee gathers evidence using a variety of tools and techniques and arranges visits where appropriate.
<b>Stage 3 Analyse</b>	The key trends and issues are highlighted from the evidence gathered by the Committee.
<b>Stage 4 Clarify</b>	The Committee discusses and identifies the principal messages of the review from the work undertaken.

<b>Stage 5 Recommend</b>	The Committee formulates and agrees realistic recommendations.
<b>Stage 6 Report</b>	Draft and final reports are prepared based on the evidence, findings and recommendations.
<b>Stage 7 Monitor</b>	The Committee monitors recommendations on a regularly agreed basis.

#### **4. Overall Aim of the Scrutiny Policy Review**

- 4.1 To evaluate the approach to reducing the number of victims of domestic violence; through awareness raising, increasing the reporting and detection of domestic violence and supporting victims of domestic violence.

#### **5. Proposed Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Policy Review**

- 5.1 The Terms of Reference for the policy review are proposed:-
- (a) To understand the extent of domestic violence in Sunderland and the approaches being taken to tackle this issue;
  - (b) To measure the general success to date in regard to reducing domestic violence, with a particular focus on awareness raising and reporting and detection rates; and
  - (c) To examine how the Safer Sunderland Partnership, statutory bodies and other service providers in the city are supporting victims of domestic violence.

#### **6. Potential Areas of Enquiry and Sources of Evidence**

- 6.1 The Scrutiny Panel can invite or visit a variety of key stakeholders and interested parties to provide written or oral evidence in order that a balanced and focused range of recommendations can be formulated. A list of potential witnesses, though not exhaustive, is included for member's information:
- (a) Chair of the Safer Sunderland Partnership;
  - (b) Representative of Northumbria Police;
  - (c) Service Providers;
  - (d) Sunderland Domestic Violence Court;
  - (e) Sunderland Primary Care Trust; and
  - (f) Service Users.

- 6.2 Where Policy Reviews look at cross-cutting issues, opportunities may arise to undertake joint working as endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee.
- 6.3 Community engagement plays a crucial role in the scrutiny process. Consideration will be given to how involvement can be structured in a way that the Panel encourages those views. If felt appropriate the Panel is able to co-opt an additional member to the Committee for the duration of the policy review. Regulations with regard to the co-opting of additional members can be found in the Overview and Scrutiny Handbook.
- 6.4 In addition, diversity issues have been considered in the background research for this enquiry under the Equality Standards for Local Government. As such the views of local diversity groups will be sought throughout the inquiry where felt appropriate and time allows. Consequently, consideration has been given as to how the views of people from minority communities of interest or heritage, which may not be gathered through the usual community engagement routes, can be included over the course of the inquiry.

## **7. Funding from the Dedicated Overview and Scrutiny Budget**

- 7.1 Consideration has been given, through the background research for this scoping report of the need to use funding from the Scrutiny Committee's dedicated Overview and Scrutiny budget to aid the enquiry.
- 7.2 At this stage it is suggested that funding may be necessary to support the following activities:
- (a) Key witnesses;
  - (b) Engagement with voluntary and statutory organisations;
  - (c) Activities outside of the Civic Centre (as necessary) to deliver effective scrutiny; and
  - (d) Any other activity deemed necessary to the Panel to assist in the policy review.
- 7.3 Should the Scrutiny Lead Member and Panel require funding from the Scrutiny Committee's dedicated budget, this should be brought before the Scrutiny Committee at the next available meeting for consideration, under the Lead Scrutiny Member Update.

## **8. Proposed Timetable of the Scrutiny Investigation**

- 8.1 The following timetable for the policy review is proposed:

Setting the Scene – January 2013

Evidence Gathering – January to March 2013

Consideration of Draft Final Report - March 2013

Consideration of Final Report by the Scrutiny Committee – April 2013

Consideration of Final Report by the Cabinet/ - Council June 2013  
(Tentative date)

- 8.2 As the review progresses the Panel may deem it necessary to revisit the schedule to ensure the evidence gathered fully addresses the terms of reference, taking into account the need to produce focused and robust conclusions at the end of the review period.

**9. Conclusion and Next Steps**

- 9.1 Members are asked to agree the scope of the policy review and the schedule of evidence gathering.

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