

RESPONSIVE SERVICES AND CUSTOMER CARE SCRUTINY PANEL

Notes of meeting held on: 14th January 2013, 5.00pm

Present: Cllrs David Errington, Elizabeth Gibson, Barry Curran, Anne Lawson, George Thompson, John Wiper.

Helen Lancaster (HL), Louise Preece, and Kelly Henderson (KH) (Principal Policy Officer for People & Neighbourhoods - Domestic Violence)

Apologies: Cllr Dennis Richardson and Cllr John Scott.

		Action
1.	Welcome and Introductions Cllr Errington welcomed everyone to the Panel and introductions made.	
2.	Declarations of interest Cllr Errington asked Members to declare any interests. Only declaration was from Cllr Errington who declared a personal interest in item 3 if the TPCT was discussed.	
3.	Policy Review 2012/13: Domestic Violence Scoping Report HL advised on the approach of the policy review of Domestic Violence and, outlined the term of reference and overall aim of the review. Various methods of evidence gathering for the Policy Review were discussed and highlighted in section 6 of the report, which included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A variety of people giving evidence which could include key stake holders, such as the Chair of the Safer Sunderland Partnership, representatives of Northumbria Police, service providers such as Impact Family Services and WWIN, Sunderland Domestic Violence Court, Sunderland TPCT and service users and; A site visit to a refuge HL asked Members to advise if they felt that there were any areas of evidence gathering missing from the above, that could help form part of the review. Cllr Thompson asked for clarity about what was meant by raising awareness of domestic violence and what services are available to victims. KH responded by advising the Panel that one of the overall aims was to raise awareness of domestic violence along with highlighting what services are available for victims, but also to assist Elected Members and frontline services/staff who may be approached by victims of domestic violence, to signpost victims	

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	<p>into the right support networks for help.</p> <p>Cllr Wiper asked if the review would include looking at the impact that domestic violence has on children within the household.</p> <p>Cllr Lawson also suggested that maybe the Panel needs to look at families to assess the impact on them.</p> <p>HL advised that this would potentially cross over with the scope of the Children's Services Panel, and there was a need to ensure the review remained focused and able to deliver a detailed piece of work within the three month schedule.</p> <p>The Panel agreed to a suggestion from Cllr Thompson that Vera Baird the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner be invited to give evidence, given that one of her key priorities is likely to be domestic and sexual violence.</p> <p>The Panel agreed the scope of the review.</p>	
4.	<p>Policy Review 2012/13: Domestic Violence – Setting the Scene</p> <p>KH provided a short presentation to the Panel, giving current statistics and information on domestic violence.</p> <p>KH advised that in March 2013 the Government's definition of domestic violence (slide 1) will be widened to include those aged 16+, and extended to include psychological, sexual, financial and emotional abuse. .</p> <p>Domestic violence isn't just physical. The perception of domestic violence is that it only happens in more deprived communities and to those more troubled families, but the evidence shows it cuts across those from all walks of life.</p> <p>Cllr Curran commented that it would often be very difficult to identify or in fact prove those types of domestic abuse where there were no physical signs. In particular, the victims themselves may not consider themselves to be so. KH commented that it was often down to the way in which cases were viewed by the Police and other agencies.</p> <p>Cllr Thompson enquired as to whether Northumbria Police were ready for the change to the domestic violence definition in terms of recording the different types of abuse in order to gain a better understanding of domestic violence in the city. KH advised that she was aware the systems were being developed and that they would be robust and breakdowns of age, gender etc would be made, although there was sometimes a disparity in the way the Police recorded domestic violence incidents. The Police can explain this further when they attend Panel. Cllr Thompson noted</p>	

	<p>Sunderland has less IDVAs, than recommended by guidance. This may well be something the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner looks at in terms of standardising the approach.</p> <p>Home Security and Sanctuary Scheme (HSSS): This scheme provides information and security improvements to victim's homes.</p> <p>Domestic Violence 24 Hour Helpline: 24 hr helpline (0800 066 5555) run by volunteers from Wearside Women In Need.</p> <p>Perpetrator Work: Specialist teams work with Perpetrators as a group or on a one-to-one basis.</p> <p>Cllr Thompson referred to the slight drop in recorded crimes in domestic violence from 2011 to 2012 and commented that this was one of the only crimes in which we would like to see a rise in recorded crime as we know this issue is largely hidden.</p> <p>Cllr Gibson commented that previously this had been a hidden issue, but that more recently there was a definite improvement in the awareness of the Police in responding the crime.</p> <p>Cllr Curran asked about the length of sentences perpetrators receive and was advise that this varied widely and would be determined by the seriousness of the abuse/violence.</p> <p>KH advised the panel that she would provide further information relating to domestic violence where necessary and throughout the review.</p>	
5.	<p>New Issues from the Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>No new issues to report.</p>	
6.	<p>Issues to feedback to next Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>HL reported this is a regular item on the agenda, allowing members to raise areas of concern or issues to be reported back to the Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>HL advised that Cllr Errington would be presenting the Panel's final report on Reducing Re-offending at the Scrutiny Committee on 17th January. After this the report will go to Cabinet on 13th February and the Safer Sunderland Partnership in March. As part of the Cabinet process the relevant Directorates will have to produce a detailed action plan which outlines how they intend to achieve the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Panel. HL will ensure the Panel receive this.</p>	HL

	Cllr Errington suggested that the tight timescale to complete two reviews should be feed back to the Scrutiny Committee be discussed to see if this was being experienced by other panel's.	
7.	AOB/Member items None	
8.	Date of future meetings HL to circulate future Panel dates to members.	