



Northumberland

County Council

COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 5TH JUNE 2019

Domestic Violence and Abuse in Northumberland

Report of Executive Director of Children's Services

Cabinet Member: Councillor Wayne Daley Deputy Leader

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to provide a six month progress update on the current partnership work programme to coordinate service provision to tackle the issues and harms caused by domestic violence and abuse in Northumberland.

Recommendations

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the contents of this report.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the 'supporting communities to feel safer' priority in the NCC Corporate Plan 2018-2021.

Key issues

1. Government consultation on its proposal for a new legal duty on local authorities to deliver support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in accommodation-based services in England.
2. Services to support children and young people who have witnessed domestic violence and abuse.
3. Prevalence data in relation to domestic abuse in Northumberland.

Background

From April 2013 the Northumberland Domestic Violence and Abuse and Sexual Violence Business group has adopted the following Home Office updated definition of domestic

abuse:

“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

The Government has recently announced plans for a Domestic Violence and Abuse Bill. The Bill will introduce the first ever statutory government definition of domestic abuse to specifically include economic abuse and controlling and coercive behaviour.

The key elements of the Bill will be to create a clear definition of the crime in law, consolidate prevention and protection measures, ensure sentences reflect the harm that domestic abuse has on children, and establish a new commissioner who will represent victims and survivors and drive forward progress.

At the beginning of May 2019 the Government announced its proposal for a new legal duty on local authorities to deliver support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in accommodation -based services in England. This will be supported by statutory guidance.

Consultation on this proposal will be open until the 2nd August 2019. The purpose of the consultation is to gather evidence and seek views on the delivery of support services from victims themselves, key professionals, service providers, local authorities, police and crime commissioners and other relevant public agencies.

Government is seeking views on:

- the definition of accommodation-based services and support
- leadership and responsibilities
- local and national accountability
- guidance

Government is suggesting a duty on lead authorities to convene a multi-agency Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Board which must perform certain specified functions, as outlined and explained in statutory guidance. These are to:

- Assess the need and demand for accommodation-based support for all victims and their children, including those who require cross-border support.
- Develop and publish strategies for the provision of support to cover the locality and diverse groups of victims.
- Make commissioning / de-commissioning decisions.
- Meet the support needs of victims and their children.
- Monitor and evaluate local delivery
- Report back to central Government

Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Board membership is likely to include, but not be limited to: local authority (as the lead); Police and Crime Commissioners, and senior representatives of Clinical Commissioning Groups, Public Health, Adults and Children’s

Services, Specialist Domestic Abuse Service Providers, and Housing Associations. Membership should also reflect the specific needs of a local area.

The consultation notes that there may be existing Boards in local authority areas which could exercise these functions. (such as Community Safety Partnerships, Health and Wellbeing Boards, Safeguarding Boards and existing Domestic Abuse or Violence Against Women and Girls Boards.)

It states the provision of support services will be funded through dedicated funding from central Government, but there is no indication what the level of funding will be.

The Northumberland Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Coordinator will work with partners to coordinate a response on behalf of the Northumberland Domestic Violence and Abuse and Sexual Violence business group.

Northumberland Context

Northumberland has an established Domestic Violence and Abuse and Sexual Violence Business group that meets quarterly, chaired by Lesley Pyle, and reports on progress to the Community Safety Partnership Board, the Northumberland Safeguarding Children's Board and the Adult Safeguarding Board.

The development of a Northumberland domestic abuse and sexual violence needs assessment has supported the Northumberland Domestic Violence and Abuse and Sexual Violence business group to develop an action plan and strategy 2018-2021.

The needs assessment relies predominantly on data from Northumbria Police, which provides an overview of the problem, but under reporting is part of the issue when considering domestic abuse, with the problem of under-reporting thought to be higher in rural areas.

A key priority for the Northumberland Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Business group in 2018/19 has been to identify partner data that is available and can be shared. The group have begun to collect and analyse this data to help inform a refresh of the needs assessment by the end of August 2019.

Northumbria Police Data

In 2018/19 there were 5,838 reported domestic abuse incidents in Northumberland, on average 486 domestic abuse incidents a month,

- 80% of the incidents were where the perpetrator was a partner/ ex-partner
- In 2,601 of these incidents there were children involved (45%)
- Of the 5,838 incidents there were 3,774 individual victims; of which:
 - 73% were female
 - 27% were male
 - 68 were from BME communities
 - 78 were aged 16 or 17 years old
 - 11% were aged over 55

- There has been an 8% Force wide increase in all Domestic Abuse incidents. The highest increases are in Gateshead (+10%), North Tyneside (+13%) and Newcastle (+11%). Northumberland was previously high (+13%) but is now 6% following a reduction of 2.0% in Q3.
- There has been a greater percentage increase in male victims (+12%) compared to female DA.
- There has been an increase of 273 victims (14%) aged over 55, and the proportion of victims who are over 55 (as a % of all DA victims) has remained constant (10%).
- There has been a reduction in the volume and proportion of victims aged 16-17 years (-3%).

The Northumberland Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence strategy for 2018 to 2021 has been approved by all three Boards, with an agreed vision:

Domestic Violence Abuse and Sexual Violence are everyone's business. We believe everyone deserves to live safely without fear.

To achieve this we will work together to ensure there is support and access to services to prevent violence and abuse and to address its impact.

Key areas of work include:

- Domestic abuse and sexual violence awareness raising and training
- The Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Champions Network
- The Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)
- Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Specialist Services
- Domestic Abuse Policy for Staff
- Operation Encompass
- Domestic Abuse and Housing
- Domestic Abuse Health Advocates
- Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (APVA)

New Developments

Operation Encompass: The Next Steps

Since its launch in Northumberland in April 2017, Operation Encompass has become successfully embedded across all schools in Northumberland as well as the wider Northumbria Police force area. It enables schools to offer immediate support for children and young people witnessing and experiencing domestic abuse.

The Northumbria Police Crime Commissioner has been successful in securing funding until March 2020 to pilot 'Operation Encompass: The Next Steps' before a planned national roll out. This is a new collaboration between Northumbria Police, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Operation Encompass and Barnardo's and it aims to build on successes so far and provide enhanced support to children, families and staff affected by domestic abuse. Schools involved will be

supported to raise awareness of healthy relationships and enable appropriate support and safeguarding within the safe school environment.

The main elements of the project will include training for all school staff, development of Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) products for Key Stages 1-4, a drop in/advice service at schools and access to new school safeguarding liaison officers (SSLOs) employed by the Northumbria Police.

Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse

Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (APVA) is recognised nationally as an issue which relates to safeguarding both adults and children. Locally, APVA has also been the focus of a Domestic Homicide Review in Northumberland 'Sarah'.

There is currently no legal definition, but APVA is a form of domestic abuse in which a parent is experiencing physical violence or controlling and coercive behaviour from their child. (Although the main focus is on teenagers, it is recognised that parents may be fearful of younger children.) APVA may present as a single violent incident, but is more likely to be a pattern of behaviour including damage to person or property, threats, stealing from the parent, humiliation or verbal abuse.

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria, Dame Vera Baird, has championed and funded the development and delivery of the 'RESPECT' programme across the region. This provides a structured approach to working with both parents and children in order to de-escalate difficulties in specific families. A small group of workers in Northumberland have been trained and accredited to deliver this intensive programme and a referral pathway is in place to identify and prioritise families for this process.

Service Provision in Northumberland

The Domestic Abuse Support Service Northumberland (DASSN) delivered by Places for People Living + has been commissioned by NCC since 1st March 2018 to provide an integrated service for both female and male victims over the age of 16.

The service includes a single point of access for all referrals 24 hours a day 7 days a week, safe refuge accommodation, dispersed accommodation, resettlement into the community and outreach support, as well as Independent Domestic Violence Advisors to support people identified as high risk.

In addition, for 2019/20, the service also has three new assertive outreach officers funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The assertive outreach team will work with those service users who historically disengage with services, working with them in a trauma informed way to reduce risk, encourage engagement with services and secure and maintain stable accommodation.

A pilot outreach project offering counselling and therapeutic support for children and young people, 4 to 18 years old, who have witnessed domestic abuse and are resident in Northumberland has been funded from October 2018 to October 2019.

The pilot is delivered by Acorns, a small voluntary sector charity based in North Tyneside. For this pilot they have employed a counsellor to cover Northumberland on an outreach basis, using rooms in schools and children's centres for the counselling sessions. From October 2018 to March 2019 eleven young people were being supported and seventeen on a waiting list. An evaluation of this pilot will inform future planning.

Other Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence services in Northumberland:

- Northumberland Domestic Abuse Service (NDAS) have secured further funding from a range of sources including the Northumbria PCC to enable them to continue to provide services in Northumberland until March 2020. NDAS accept self referrals for standard and medium risk across the county but are focussing on addressing the need in the rural and coastal communities.
- Cygnus have funding from range of charitable sources and the Northumbria PCC to offer counselling, psychotherapy and practical and emotional support to women, men and young people aged 14 years and over in Northumberland who are or have been victims of domestic and/or sexual violence.
- Grace (Northumberland Rape Crisis) are funded by NCC and the MoJ to offer practical and emotional support and counselling to women and girls aged 13 years and over, who have experienced sexual violence.
- Barnardos are funded by NCC until March 2020 to offer ten places on a 26 week perpetrators programme in Northumberland.
- Victims First Northumbria (VFN) are funded by the Northumbria PCC to support victims of crime, including domestic abuse.

Implications

Policy	No direct Policy implications
Finance and value for money	Commissioned services are monitored and evaluated. The contract value for delivery of the Domestic Abuse Support Service is £210,975.
Legal	No direct Legal implications.
Procurement	The Integrated Domestic Abuse Support Service was commissioned 1st March 2018.
Human Resources	The Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Coordinator was appointed November 2017.
Property	None
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached)	Impact Assessment will have been completed as part of the procurement process.

Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> X N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	
Risk Assessment	None
Crime & Disorder	The response to domestic violence and abuse has a significant impact on the councils duty under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and its response to tackling crime, disorder and anti social behaviour.
Customer Consideration	None
Carbon reduction	None
Wards	All

Background papers:

Domestic Abuse Services Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government May 2019
Northumberland Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Needs Assessment 2018

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

	initials
Monitoring Officer/Legal	
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	
Relevant Executive Director	CMcE
Chief Executive	
Portfolio Holder(s)	

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