

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: 10 th June 2013	Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Report title:		Update on implementation of recommendations contained in the Housing and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Report on Review of Services Relating to Domestic Violence and Abuse in Southwark dated September 2012	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Richard Livingstone, Cabinet Member For Finance, Resources And Community Safety	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the progress that the council has made in response to the Review of Services Relating to Domestic Violence and Abuse Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommendations.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. In July 2011 Southwark Housing and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee decided to review the services relating to domestic abuse. The scrutiny process began in late 2011 and continued until June 2012. The review was timely as we were implementing the new service model delivered by one service provider and delivering key changes internally.
3. Councillor Richard Livingstone, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Community Safety presented a report to Cabinet in January 2013 responding to the overview and scrutiny committee recommendations. This report is a further update on how the council is progressing with the implementation of those recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION

4. Accurate statistics - significantly, Solace's monthly output statistics produced on the number of cases they are coming across are not matching the local police statistics (based on recorded crime) either according to quantity or trend. The sub-committee feels that the statistics produced by Solace are more likely to be reflective of the real extent of domestic violence in the borough. In future, these are the statistics which should be used to inform the council and Solace's action to tackle domestic abuse.

UPDATE

5. Data gathered from both Solace and the MPS has been used to this year, to inform the Safer Southwark Partnership Strategic Assessment matrix, which is the tool the partnership uses to set priorities and allocate resources. The use of both data sets has informed our priorities for 2013/14. Our methodology has been recognised as best practice by the senior management in the MPS.

RECOMMENDATION

6. Dedicated domestic violence court - time between incident and court hearing needs to be drastically reduced. Domestic violence courts have been very effective in

other London boroughs in reducing this time and consequently increasing conviction rates. Southwark Council on its own cannot deliver this much needed reform. The sub-committee will write to all three Southwark MPs to see what influence they can bring to bear on ministers and the courts service to deliver this change. The sub-committee would also ask that the Cabinet Member for Community Safety initiates work with executive councillors in Lambeth to see what further work can be done to deliver a dedicated domestic violence court. Southwark cannot continue to have such a low conviction rate, which exacerbates the problem of domestic violence in our borough.

UPDATE

7. Letters have been sent to local MPs highlighting the challenges and to the Ministry of Justice pressing further for appropriate criminal justice services for victims, we await a response. We are continuing to work with partners to make use of the resources available to achieve better outcomes for victims and witnesses.

RECOMMENDATION

8. Training – the training programme for relevant Southwark Council staff and other external agencies needs to be rolled out as a matter of urgency. There should be no further delay. Priority groups for training are: community leaders (TRA leaders, faith group leaders, voluntary and community sector and councillors) and professionals (social workers, area housing staff and council staff, who have regular contact with residents). This is important as domestic abuse needs to be ‘owned’ by all that come into contact with it. Officers can make routine enquiries about domestic abuse in assessments etc and all should know what the next steps should be.

UPDATE

9. Since the domestic abuse awareness training was launched in November 2012 to April 2013, 68 people have attended the sessions (which are advertised through the council’s learning and development portal).
10. Officers are attending the upcoming Member Development Group meeting in June to present a proposal to deliver domestic abuse awareness training to all elected Members. They will also explore with elected Members representatives the possibility of a number of Councillors attending the more intensive three day domestic abuse champion training.
11. In addition, officers have found a provider to design a domestic abuse e-learning package (similar to the Safeguarding e-learning package) which contents will be provided by Solace. This will be available to members of the public and community groups to sign up to on my learning source free of charge. It will be the first time that the council implements such an innovative approach to domestic abuse awareness raising.

RECOMMENDATION

12. Domestic abuse champions - in addition, managers in Southwark Council should identify domestic abuse champions. These would be members of staff across council departments who would be given additional specialist training. They would then be a resource which their colleagues could consult if they were concerned about a possible incident of domestic violence. This has been successfully done in other London boroughs.

UPDATE

13. The Domestic Abuse Champions training programme went live in February 2013. This programme is an intensive 3 day course delivered over a three week period which a maximum of 10 participants per session.
14. 25 council officers have successfully completed the programme to date with very positive feedback. The next programme to take place in June. Further dates have already been agreed for July and August.
15. Officers going on the domestic abuse champions training are being nominated by senior management in order to ensure that they are the best placed person within their teams to act as point of contact and to disseminate the learning among their colleagues.

RECOMMENDATION

16. Linking tenancy and leaseholder status to attendance on behaviour change programme - Officers and Solace report that one recurring issue is that perpetrators of domestic violence are often extremely reluctant to attend the "behaviour change programme". Where the perpetrator is a council tenant, the council should consider making attendance on the programme a condition of continued tenancy. Officers from Solace and housing should work closely together to use tenancy as leverage to force perpetrators to attend the programme. The council could also consider taking the same approach with leaseholders, where the council is the freeholder.

UPDATE

17. The most recent contract monitoring data shows that 46 referrals had been made to the perpetrator programme by the end of December 2012. Work has taken place to promote the service amongst housing staff and we will be monitoring the impact this has on the number of referrals.
18. In addition DVIP will offer training for council officers on how to engage assertively with perpetrators of domestic abuse. They are putting in place strategies to further increase referrals, proposing more motivational work with individuals prior to commencing the programme and promoting collaborative working with referring front line officers.
19. The council has secured additional funding to run an adolescent perpetrator programme Yuva, delivered by DVIP, to work with young people (age 11- 25) who have used violence and/or abuse in their close relationships with family members and/or (ex) partners. The primary aim is increasing safety and supporting positive relationships for all involved.
20. The Management Needs Panel organised and administered by housing options considers the priority banding of housing applications from council tenants who are victims of domestic abuse and not perpetrators. Encouraging perpetrators of domestic abuse who hold council tenancies to attend behaviour change seminars will need to be mindful of the council's relationship breakdown policy - point 2.1.2 (also set out in the tenants' handbook) which states 'Where a relationship breakdown is the result of domestic violence the Council will not re-house or grant the tenancy of the dwelling house to the perpetrator of domestic violence.'
21. When a tenant's application is accepted by the Housing Needs Panel, housing options will grant Band 2 priority on the housing register and the client is invited to bid for a suitable home in a safe area.

RECOMMENDATION

22. Victims of indeterminate immigration status, no recourse to public funds. The council does respond to those high risk victims with no recourse through the multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) process, however options remain extremely limited. Southwark officers should await the outcome and recommendations of children's services research into cases where the victim has no recourse to public funds. On receipt of this research a further action plan on how to deal with this difficult issue should be drawn up by the council. The sub-committee will ask local MPs to write to ministers to highlight the issue and the need for further resources.

UPDATE

23. The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is a multidisciplinary and multi agency dedicated team to respond to this and other difficult issues. The team is currently being developed. They will be based in Sumner House and members of this new team have already been identified within existing resources. It is expected that they will be fully operational from June. They will deliver bespoke, tailored council response that will bring together expertise and legal advice in order to safeguard the most vulnerable. Officers are exploring the possibility of co-locating a SASS worker with the team on a weekly or fortnightly basis.
24. In addition, where a client with a priority need is suffering domestic abuse and has no recourse to public funds, housing options makes a referral to Social Services. For ineligible women with no recourse, assistance is limited and housing options generally makes referrals to Southall Black Sisters who support females from minority ethnic communities.

RECOMMENDATION

25. Placing a domestic abuse caseworker with police. The sub-committee recommends (as per the Solace contract) that the police prioritise the co-location of a domestic abuse support worker at key days and times. This helps the police to understand the process and needs of victims as well as ensures victims have access to support services in the shortest possible time frame.

UPDATE

26. From November 2012 a SASS staff member has been based at the police station for a full day every fortnight. The arrangement continues to show positive results with very positive comments from police colleagues and it will be reviewed and evaluated in the coming months.
27. In addition, in order to increase the take up of the service and the number of police referrals, we are running a pilot by producing 1,500 call cards with details of the SASS service which are being attached to all Southwark police domestic abuse incident reporting books which front line police officers take with them when attending domestic abuse incidents. The aim is that they are reminded and prompted to offer the support service to victims at the point of crisis when they are more likely and willing to accept offers of help. This has already resulted in an increase of self referrals in the last month with 31 the highest number since the service went live.

RECOMMENDATION

28. Risk assessment criteria - concern was raised by staff working at the Southwark/Solace

Advocacy Support Service that staff in different council departments and other agencies were often using different risk assessments. This may, in part, be due to statutory frameworks requiring different focus, but should not be an excuse for making the system more complex and onerous for victims. Officers and Solace should train/work with agencies and council departments to ensure that the correct risk assessment criteria are used.

UPDATE

29. Different agencies and different departments have statutory responsibilities that require different assessments to be completed. In order to minimise risk to individuals and to reduce timescales, agencies are encouraged to use whatever risk assessments they have to flag at person at risk to SASS. What is important is that the person completing any risk assessment that identifies domestic abuse is competent to assess risk and that consistent criteria is used regardless of the tool.
30. Further work has been undertaken with SASS to ensure that the correct risk assessment criteria is being used and it is a key element of the training packages delivered. We have had no further concerns raised by SASS.

RECOMMENDATION

31. Changing the response from the housing department - officers told the sub-committee that often it was the victim who was removed from his/her home, the abusive situation, to be re-housed in less than adequate accommodation. Senior managers in the housing department need to work with officers in community safety to ensure that measures are put in place to enable bespoke action plans to better meet the needs of victims.

UPDATE

32. Housing operations has continued the work undertaken since the last report to transform the way the division works. Between January - February 2013 over 60 resident officers attended staff briefing sessions delivered by SASS and DVIP. These briefings were to raise awareness of the service, referral pathways and to develop knowledge and skills in relation to domestic abuse. The sessions had very positive feedback and officers will be monitoring the impact the briefings had on the number of referrals.
33. Housing operations provided a briefing session to SASS staff. This ensured SASS staff understand the role of the landlord function and the legislative framework within which we work. This also served to build effective working relationships.
34. The housing operations division played a key role in the design of the champions training to ensure maximum impact and has ensured that domestic abuse champions are in place and effectively working. Housing operations has nominated a divisional management team domestic abuse lead, who ensures the divisional response to domestic abuse is robust and strong. Each business unit has a champion at the management level and at least two champions at the officer level, to ensure we are able to respond properly and deliver right first time customer service to approaches for support and services. The operations domestic abuse champions, along with safeguarding and troubled families lead officers, have quarterly meetings to ensure they are embedding learning and improving service delivery.
35. Housing operations also now attends the Early Help Panel as the departmental representative. This is another forum in which we are able to address issues of domestic abuse within a partnership context.

36. In addition housing operations has worked with SASS and DVIP to improve awareness of the services by our tenants and leaseholders. This has been achieved by SASS attending the mobile office, which visits a number of estates and key locations across the borough. The mobile office will also provide an enhanced visibility for these services particularly during key periods such as peak domestic abuse reports times and International Women's Week.
37. There is now also a single point of contact in housing operations for the sanctuary scheme, following on from the transfer of this service to SASS.
38. Housing operations has also worked in support of the community safety partnership services and housing options to ensure that the management needs panel is operating as effectively as possible.
39. All housing options staff have received domestic violence training and have adopted a victim-centred approach. Clients experiencing domestic violence are able to approach the housing options Service where they will be interviewed (by a female officer if requested). Housing options Officers complete a risk assessment form directly with the client and a referral is then made to Solace for ongoing support.
40. Although domestic violence is a cause of homelessness, it does not convey a 'priority need' under homelessness legislation. The council's temporary accommodation resources are therefore focused on those homeless households with a priority need. Housing options makes arrangements to place this group in temporary accommodation as appropriate and ensures that any emergency accommodation is located in a 'safe' area.
41. The on-line housing options self-assessment service (also known as the housing options Wizard) is accessible via the council's website or via www.southwarkhomesearch.org.uk and this provides advice to those experiencing domestic abuse including signposting to housing options and other support agencies.

RECOMMENDATION

42. Staffing levels in support service – On the visit to the Southwark/Solace Advocacy Support Service another issue which arose was staffing levels, particularly in relation to caseworkers and counsellors. The Cabinet Member for Community Safety should consider prioritising funding for two additional posts (one caseworker and one counsellor) as and when it is possible to identify funding for these posts.

UPDATE

43. Community safety continues its efforts to ensure that funding for all council commissioned domestic abuse related services is managed efficiently under one same contract. As a result the service was expanded in March 2013 with the addition of a part time worker to deliver the Sanctuary scheme which oversees the implementation of home security measures to allow victims to safely remain in their homes.
44. Officers have also secured additional funding from the Mayor's Office for Police and Crime (MOPAC) London Crime Prevention Fund, to expand services directed at reducing violence against women and girls. As a result the council will be running the following additional services:
 - Additional SASS staff member to offer dedicated counselling services for survivors of domestic and sexual abuse in our borough.

- Additional DVIP staff member to deliver a young perpetrators programme (currently only available to adults over 18 years old), this will include young people who are displaying abusive behaviours towards relatives (parents, siblings, etc.)
 - An innovative pilot to develop a smart phone safety application and improved IT and online systems for victims of abuse to be supported by their support workers, family and friends.
 - Specialist youth mentors based at Kings College A&E to signpost to support services young females presenting with signs of abuse and/or sexual violence.
 - A community capacity building programme for young females affected by gangs.
45. London Councils held their grants committee meeting in late February to allocate the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) element of their grants programme (Southwark officers were involved in the panel which put the recommendations forward). They have recently circulated a summary of successful projects and borough breakdown information. Officers are in the process of engaging with the relevant organisations to ensure Southwark residents benefit from these additional services. A summary list of the successful VAWG projects and a breakdown of target number of clients per borough is available on request.

RECOMMENDATION

46. Ensuring all staff in the housing options unit take responsibility for reports of domestic abuse – all staff should take responsibility for dealing with those presenting as victims of domestic abuse. This is particularly important in high risk areas such as the housing options unit. Managers should ensure staff are trained and able to do this. Timely and high standard bespoke action planning should be undertaken and necessary referrals made.

UPDATE

47. Community safety and housing options officers met in February and agreed a number of actions to continue improving referral pathways with the domestic abuse service. Colleagues from housing options and housing operations have delivered training to SASS staff on how the housing allocation process works in our borough and we are in the process of agreeing a joint working protocol for housing management needs panel, which will be cascaded down to all housing members of staff.
48. In addition a housing options manager has already enrolled in the DA champions programme and there are plans to nominate a further two officers from housing options and Homelessness Services to ensure that awareness is raised across the teams within the service.
49. All housing options officers have been trained to offer a victim-centred approach and are experienced in completing risk assessments and making referrals to Solace. Ongoing training will continue to be offered with the domestic abuse champion also cascading information to the teams.
50. Housing options works closely with all SELHP boroughs and has been involved in the joint development of the SELHP Domestic Violence Protocol. This enables the council to refer victims at risk in Southwark to other south east London boroughs without them having to approach via the homelessness route. Similarly Southwark's housing options

Services are able to reciprocate and consider referrals from Lewisham, Greenwich, Bromley and Bexley in the same way. Housing options attends quarterly SELHP domestic violence group meetings to share information, good practice and monitor the protocol.

RECOMMENDATION

51. Peckham area is a hot-spot for domestic violence incidents. The Solace “hub and spoke” structure in the borough needs to make sure that sufficient facilities for support meetings are available in this part of the borough. There has been some delay in securing these facilities and these needs to be addressed urgently.

UPDATE

52. The spokes model described in our last report continues to operate successfully.
53. Officers are working with SASS staff and a local film maker to produce a short advertisement raising awareness of domestic abuse and the help that is available in our borough with views to having it screened at Peckham multiplex cinema.

APPENDICES

No.	Title
N/A	

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Housing and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Report on Review of Services Relating to Domestic Violence and Abuse in Southwark September 2012 (at Cabinet Oct 2012)	160 Tooley Street, London SE1 http://modern.gov.southwarksites.com/documents/g4247/Public%20reports%20pack%20Tuesday%2023-Oct-2012%2016.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10	Eva Gomez 02075257246
Response to recommendations in the Housing and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Report on Review of Services Relating to Domestic Violence and Abuse in Southwark dated September 2012 (at Cabinet January 2013)	160 Tooley Street, London SE1 http://modern.gov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s34828/Report%20Response%20to%20Recommendations%20from%20the%20Housing%20and%20Community%20Safety%20Scrutiny%20Sub-Committee%20rep.pdf	Eva Gomez 02075257246

AUDIT TRAIL

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Lead Officer	Deborah Collins, Strategic Director of Environment & Leisure	
Report Author	Jonathon Toy, Head of Community Safety and Enforcement, E&L	
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Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Director of Legal Services	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services	No	No
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional/Community Council/Scrutiny Team		