

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday 17 September 2012
7.00 pm
160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

Membership

Councillor Catherine Bowman (Chair)
Councillor Dan Garfield (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Neil Coyle
Councillor Toby Eckersley
Councillor Gavin Edwards
Councillor David Hubber
Councillor Lorraine Lauder MBE
Councillor Paul Noblet
Councillor David Noakes
Councillor the Right Revd Emmanuel Oyewole
Councillor Mark Williams

Reserves

Councillor Kevin Ahern
Councillor James Barber
Councillor Nick Dolezal
Councillor Tim McNally
Councillor Darren Merrill
Councillor Helen Morrissey
Councillor Lisa Rajan
Councillor Lewis Robinson
Councillor Martin Seaton
Councillor Cleo Soanes
Councillor Geoffrey Thornton

Education representatives

Reverend Nicholas Elder
Colin Elliott, Parent Governor
Leticia Ojeda, Parent Governor

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Contact

Peter Roberts on 020 7525 4350 or email: peter.roberts@southwark.gov.uk

Members of the committee are summoned to attend this meeting

Eleanor Kelly

Chief Executive

Date: 7 September 2012



Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday 17 September 2012

7.00 pm

Ground Floor Meeting Room G02B - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

Order of Business

Item No.	Title	Page No.
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PART A - OPEN BUSINESS

1. APOLOGIES

2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

In special circumstances, an item of business may be added to an agenda within five clear working days of the meeting.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

Members to declare any personal interests and dispensation in respect of any item of business to be considered at this meeting.

4. MINUTES

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To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the open section of the meeting held on 16 July 2012.

5. REVIEW OF SERVICES RELATING TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE IN SOUTHWARK - FINAL SCRUTINY REPORT (HOUSING, ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE)

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6. WORK PROGRAMME

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To consider work programme, including planning for cabinet member interviews, budget scrutiny and next contract briefing and timetabling of allotments and any other scrutiny reviews.

DISCUSSION OF ANY OTHER OPEN ITEMS AS NOTIFIED AT THE START OF THE MEETING.

Item No.

Title

Page No.

PART B - CLOSED BUSINESS

**DISCUSSION OF ANY CLOSED ITEMS AS NOTIFIED AT THE START
OF THE MEETING AND ACCEPTED BY THE CHAIR AS URGENT.**

Date: 7 September 2012



OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Monday 16 July 2012 at 7.00 pm at 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Catherine Bowman (Chair)
Councillor James Barber (Reserve)
Councillor Neil Coyle
Councillor Toby Eckersley
Councillor Gavin Edwards
Councillor Lorraine Lauder MBE
Councillor Tim McNally (Reserve)
Councillor Paul Noblet
Councillor the Right Revd Emmanuel Oyewole
Councillor Martin Seaton (Reserve)
Councillor Mark Williams

EDUCATION REPRESENTATIVES: Leticia Ojeda, Parent Governor

ALSO PRESENT: Emma Ailes, Journalist from Southwark News
Canon Grahame Shaw, Chair of Governors, St Paul's Church of England Primary School

OFFICER SUPPORT: Kerry Crichlow, Assistant Director Strategy & Support
Earl Legister, Team Leader Food Safety
David Littleton, Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager
Ferenc Morath, Investment Manager
Gerri Scott, Strategic Director of Housing and Community Services
Peter Roberts, Scrutiny Project Manager

1. APOLOGIES

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dan Garfield, David Hubber and David Noakes and, for lateness, from Councillor Neil Coyle. Councillors James Barber, Tim McNally and Martin Seaton attended as reserves.

2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

- 2.1 The Chair reminded committee members that they would be asked to note the sub-committee's work programmes.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

- 3.1 There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 8 May and 18 June 2012 be agreed as an accurate record.

5. FOOD HYGIENE IN SCHOOL KITCHENS

- 5.1 David Littleton, Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager, and Earl Legister, Team Leader Food Safety, briefed the committee. The officers explained that 90% of Southwark schools had now been awarded four to five stars under the new Food Hygiene Rating Scheme and the remaining 10% had been awarded three stars. The Southwark News journalist had been advised that they were taking information from the wrong website, which was not under the council's control, and that it was not possible to make comparisons with other local authorities by using this website. At the time of the article, all Southwark schools were broadly compliant. Officers emphasised that Southwark was a top performer and initiated more prosecutions than its comparative neighbours but had never had cause to take enforcement action in a school.
- 5.2 Members asked for reassurance that the information on the Food Standards Agency website was accurate and up to date. Officers clarified that there was a three weeks' delay before data was uploaded in order to allow time for appeals. In response to further questions from members, officers stressed that the key issue was whether schools were compliant and delivering safe food. The section's focus had to be on food premises which were not meeting the requirements.
- 5.3 In response to questions, officers reiterated that, under the previous "scores on the doors" scheme, a rating of two stars equated to a premises being broadly compliant and raising no particular issues of concern. Officers also explained that a score could reflect the age of a structure, the layout and fabric of a building. Officers stressed that there was no basis for the concern expressed in the press article and that the journalist had been contacted in order to explain this. Officers also commented that council advice that the journalist needed to put in a freedom of information request in respect of particular information had been reported as a refusal to give the information.

- 5.4 A member asked how many regular inspection visits were made to schools. Officers explained that the findings of the inspection determined the number and frequency of re-visits. The risk rating scheme was very robust and ensured that those premises which needed it were inspected. Unlike the old system, under the new system it was possible to update a rating after a re-visit.
- 5.5 Another member queried the length of time during which schools had appeared on two different ratings systems. Officers explained that a soft launch of the new system had been intended but that unfortunately the journalist had accessed the data before the launch and before the old website had been turned off. The FSA had still not turned off the old “scores on the doors” website.
- 5.6 The chair asked for the perspective of the children’s services department on the issue of food hygiene in schools, particularly bearing in mind the council’s healthy food strategy. Kerry Crichlow, Assistant Director Strategy & Support, clarified that the nutritional offer and meeting food standards was the responsibility of governors of maintained schools. The council supported the governors and had written to academies to encourage them to follow similar standards. The council’s position was one of influence rather than direct power.
- 5.7 The chair asked what action would be taken if a school was not delivering the quality of meals that the council expected. The Assistant Director Strategy & Support stated that there was no evidence of this. The department was advised by colleagues in environmental health to ensure that accommodation and kitchens were compliant. In response to a question she explained that the additional capital investment related to the healthy school meals policy had been targeted at equipment to enable more children to eat meals at school, for instance extra ovens and freezers. Members were also interested in procedures to follow up on any public health issues such as outbreaks of food poisoning. The Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager was not aware of any such outbreak.
- 5.8 Some members were unclear as to whether the children’s services department had been aware of the number of schools with only a two-star rating under the old system. The Assistant Director Strategy & Support stressed that the department would be advised by colleagues in Environmental Health of any causes for concern.
- 5.9 A member asked whether food supplied to schools had a sell-by date. The Assistant Director Strategy & Support stated that she would provide details to the member.
- 5.10 Canon Grahame Shaw, chair of governors at St Paul’s Church of England Primary School, addressed the committee. His school had been cited in the article as an example of a school with a low rating. Canon Shaw explained that a new kitchen had been fitted at great cost and that, especially in view of this, he was appalled when he read the press article. The school maintained the highest standards in food delivery. Both he and the head teacher had contacted Southwark News after the article and he felt that the response had been inadequate. Canon Shaw commented that the school would be happy for more frequent food hygiene inspections.

- 5.11 In response to questions, Canon Shaw confirmed that food hygiene and nutritional value were high on the school's list of priorities. He reported that before the kitchen re-fit 75% of pupils had school dinners but that this had now increased to 98%. In his opinion the reporting in Southwark News was not good enough and he added that the school had received no apology for the writing of the article. Canon Shaw also explained that there had been no inspection of the school since the article and emphasised his view that anyone writing such an article should have verified the current situation before publishing.
- 5.12 Councillor the Right Reverend Emmanuel Oyewole, vice-chair of the education scrutiny sub-committee, commented that members of the sub-committee had visited Southwark schools at various times and seen the high standards of kitchens. He suggested that it was high time that Southwark News printed an apology.
- 5.13 The chair invited Emma Ailes, the journalist from Southwark News, to comment on the discussion. She explained that a list had been compiled from the "scores on the doors" system and submitted to the Southwark press office for comment. The press office had explained that one system was being phased out and a new system was taking its place. The journalist had searched out the new website and updated the list for further comment. The final list was confusing with some schools having three different ratings available online and the journalist commented that this was confusing to parents and other interested members of the public. Some of the figures appeared not to be up to date. Some schools were listed under the catering agency rather than the school. St Paul's school had been awarded a two stars' rating.
- 5.14 The Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager explained again that under the old system a score could not be updated until the next inspection and that the press office was aware of this. The journalist was sorry that schools had got caught in the changeover between two systems and congratulated the council on re-inspecting Southwark schools so quickly. She also stated that she had spoken to the head teacher of St Paul's and arranged a follow-up visit which had unfortunately been cancelled by the school. She was happy to do a story about the new kitchens and the increased take-up of school meals.
- 5.15 A member was concerned that schools had not realised that information was already in the public domain and took the view that this information was sometimes obscurely recorded, for instance not under the name of the school. He hoped that the council would talk to schools that had less than a four star rating. The chair asked officers what freedom was possible in terms of the inspection regime. Officers clarified that the risk assessment of premises determined the next inspection.
- 5.16 Members asked whether it was possible to make information more accessible, especially to parents, and whether the council could publicise its own list of ratings. The committee asked officers to come back to its meeting in October with possible options and costings.

6. MAJOR WORKS - WATES MAJOR WORKS CONTRACT BERMONDSEY AND ROTHERHITHE

- 6.1 Gerri Scott, strategic director of housing and community services, and Ferenc Morath, investment manager, introduced the report. In response to questions from members, they explained that the contract had initially been awarded on the basis of a quality/price evaluation. The possible back-up contractor, Apollo, was more expensive based on initial estimates but for the type of works necessary on Hawkstone, John Kennedy House and the 4 Squares Estate its price was very similar to Wates.
- 6.2 Members queried whether the Wates price could ever have been achieved. The strategic director commented that in the past the price of contracts had increased during delivery but that on this occasion the council had not been persuaded of any need for an increase. The investment manager added that Wates had put in low prices in some areas and had been specifically written to about these areas but had held to their price.
- 6.3 Members were concerned about the impact on leaseholders of an increase in price. The strategic director explained that the council had taken legal advice and was confident that a decision to use the cheapest back-up contractor could not be challenged. At the same time, detailed conversations had been held with leaseholders in order to explain the situation. One to one discussions had taken place with leaseholders about options for payment.
- 6.4 Members were also concerned at any delay in work that would result from a change in contractor. The strategic director indicated that the new contractor would be able to get on-site very quickly and that other contracts were already progressing. In response to further questions, the investment manager explained that work on other estates were behind time, including Manor, St Saviour and Dickens, but that as these were smaller contracts it would be a relatively quick contract process and that the design process had not been interrupted.
- 6.5 Members asked whether the council would gain a reputation for holding contractors to account and what would be the possible effect of this. The strategic director commented that the decision had been covered in the trade press and was helpful to the council in terms of ensuring that other contracts delivered what the council wanted. However, terminating a contract would always be a decision in the last resort, especially bearing in mind the impact on residents' expectations and officer resources.
- 6.6 A member suggested that the validity of the partnering concept was now cast into doubt. The investment manager responded that, instead, the strength of partnering had been shown in that it was possible to continue contracts and not delay works. In addition, it was possible to benchmark partnered and funded contracts against those of other authorities. The strategic director gave her view that a mixed economy lead to healthy provision but that partnering required extremely strong contract management. The investment manager added that going through the supply chain process with a number of contractors achieved a combined price at a lower rate. Also, contractors were rewarded if they did not

take up the full amount of inflation each year.

- 6.7 Some members were concerned at the quality of work that would be delivered by Apollo, especially on the 4 Squares Estate. The strategic director reported that residents in the Wates contract area were being enabled to see the work that Apollo was currently delivering in other areas. In addition, the council had engaged in robust discussions with Apollo and the contractor had clarified its whole management structure and new senior managers who would be responsible for work in Southwark. The council would be able to agree the specific materials to be used in homes. The strategic director stated that the overwhelming majority of tenants trusted that the council would be able to get value for money from a contract with Apollo.

7. SUB-COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMMES

- 7.1 The committee noted the draft work programmes circulated by chairs of sub-committees and looked forward to updates.
- 7.2 Councillor Mark Williams, chair of health, adult social care, communities & citizenship scrutiny sub-committee, reported that the sub-committee would be looking at three main topics – the merger of King’s health partners, public health and dementia care. The sub-committee would also be maintaining watching briefs on the move to delegated authority and the reorganisation of the mental health of older adults survey in addition to interviewing the chair of the safeguarding board and the cabinet member.
- 7.3 The chair of the committee reported that she had asked for a briefing on the shadow health and wellbeing board and an item on risk analysis/management of large regeneration projects. The committee would have to consider how it wished to undertake its scrutiny of the budget.

The meeting ended at 9.05 pm

Review of Services Relating to Domestic Violence and Abuse in Southwark

Report of the Housing, Environment, Transport &
Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-committee

September 2012



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Part 2 Scrutiny of services relating to domestic violence and abuse

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- Statistical overview of domestic abuse in Southwark
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- Early performance indicators on Solace Women's Aid contract
- Interview with Jain Lemom (Mayor's Office for Police and Crime)
- Visit to Domestic Abuse Advocacy and Support Centre
- Issues to be addressed

Part 3 Conclusions and recommendations

Introduction

1. Domestic abuse can devastate the lives of its victims. The support that victims receive from a variety of different bodies can be crucial in helping them to move on, ensuring perpetrators are held to account and breaking cycles of violence in the home.
2. In July 2011 Southwark Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee decided to review services relating to domestic abuse. The scrutiny process began in late 2011 and continued until June 2012. The review was particularly timely because Southwark Council was moving to a new integrated approach to dealing with domestic abuse via the commissioning of a new contract with the specialist organisation "Solace – Women's Aid".
3. It is important from the outset to understand the broad definition of domestic abuse which the sub-committee considered. Southwark Council uses the same definition as that adopted by the Greater London Authority, which is:

"Domestic abuse is a pattern of behaviour which is characterised by the exercise of control and the misuse of power by one person, usually a man, over another, usually a woman, within the context of an intimate relationship. It can be manifested in a variety of ways, including but not restricted to, physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and the imposition of social isolation and is most commonly a combination of them all."
4. The sub-committee heard evidence that this broad definition adopted by Southwark includes the following:
 - Heterosexual men abused by heterosexual women
 - Same sex relationships
 - Relationships involving a personal/family/otherwise carer
 - Parent/other adult relationships with children
 - Former partners and relationships
 - 'Honour crimes'
 - Between young people under 18 in the context of 'dating violence'
5. The scrutiny began at the sub-committee's January 2011 meeting where we received an introductory presentation from officers in the Domestic Abuse Team and from Jonathan Toy, Head of Community Safety. Further information was collected prior to the meeting in April, where issues were considered in further detail. This meeting included further presentations from Southwark's Domestic Abuse Team, Housing Officers, representatives of Solace Women's Aid and Jain Lemon from the Mayor's Office for Police and Crime. The scrutiny also included further discussion and correspondence with officers with responsibility for domestic abuse and a visit by the chair of the sub-committee to a domestic violence centre run by Solace. The presentation made by domestic violence and community safety officers at the April meeting was based on requests for further information that the sub-committee had made at the January meeting.
6. The sub-committee's general approach to this issue was to delve into the issues relating to domestic abuse in Southwark and attempt to identify issues which, if addressed, could improve how domestic abuse is dealt with in the borough.

Recent developments in Southwark council provision on domestic abuse

7. Domestic abuse and violence against women and girls is a key priority in the council's Violent Crime Strategy 2010-15, adopted in December 2010 and the Safer Southwark Partnership's (SSP) Rolling Action and Commissioning Plan 2011-12

The newly commissioned integrated service

8. Up until March 2012, Southwark's system for reporting domestic abuse and accessing support has been complex. The council has now commissioned Solace Women's Aid to run a new domestic abuse service which is intended to simplify this process and streamline the passage through the legal system for victims. It ensures a holistic service for victims, perpetrators and children and is accessible on a 24/7 basis.
9. Solace work with other service providers to deliver an integrated service. Angela D'Urso, the Commissioning Service Manager, reported to the sub-committee that performance targets for Solace are linked with the "Every Child Matters" programme.
10. Solace is a London based organisation which specialises in responding to domestic and sexual violence. It has forty years of experience in the field and is "Leading Lights" accredited.
11. The service Solace provides in Southwark is available to both female and male survivors of domestic abuse. The service provides a single point of entry with clear referral pathways. Services are hosted across the borough at different community venues. The new system also includes a risk assessment toolkit to ensure the appropriate support is provided, with low, medium and high risk options.
12. There are four strands to the Southwark Service:
 - An advocacy and support service for male and female survivors
 - A perpetrator programme run by Domestic Violence Intervention Project (DVIP)
 - A Parallel Programme for mothers and their children
 - Capacity building workshops for agencies and professionals within the borough
13. The advocacy and support service for survivors works across all risk levels. Victims have guaranteed access to an advocate of the same gender. The single point of contact is available for victims to use 24 hours a day.
14. The perpetrator programme is run by DVIP and includes a structured group work programme and proactive work with partners of men on the perpetrator programme.
15. The Parallel Programme for mothers and children helps to rebuild relationships between mothers and their children following instances of domestic abuse. It provides a safe and secure environment for children and mothers to express their feelings.
16. The contract with Solace also includes the provision of awareness raising training for external agencies and professionals, targeted community outreach, and facilitating a survivors network.
17. Solace produces monthly output statistics on the number of cases it is coming across.
18. The contract provides for a male member of staff who has a dedicated role in dealing with incidents of domestic violence where the victim is a man.

Other measures

19. The SSP has successfully bid for European funding and is delivering two large projects in schools - SHER and HEDGEHOG. The projects support young people in preventing domestic/dating abuse and sexual exploitation.
20. The SSP is currently working on:
 - Implementing and embedding the new service provided by Solace
 - Further European funding bids in partnership with Solace
 - Progressing the lead commissioner arrangement
 - Exploring future possibilities in relation to perpetrators for example tenancy conditions, contact centres

Statistical overview of domestic abuse in Southwark

21. The sub-committee brought together statistical information on domestic abuse in Southwark in an attempt to identify trends and gain a more detailed overview of the issue.
22. The sub-committee was provided with the following information about the amount of domestic abuse taking place in the borough over time. Officers stated that between 2006/07 and 2011/12 the number of domestic violence incidents increased by 15% (693 incidents). During this time period, incidents were at their highest in 2008/09 and 2009/10. There were 2231 offences with a domestic violence flag recorded in 2011/12; this is a decrease of 287 offences (-11%) from 2006/07.

Graph 1

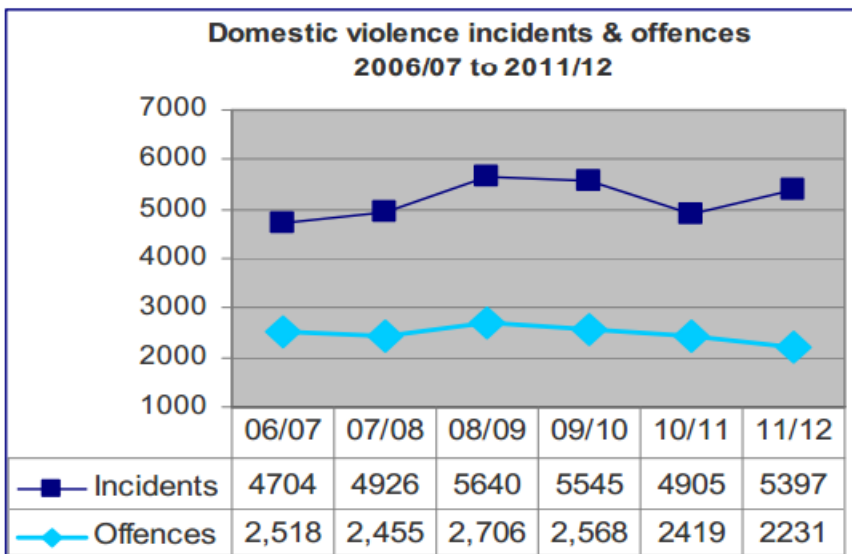


Table 1: Victims by gender, age and ethnicity

The total number of victims in 2011 was 2,228. The tables below give a full breakdown of gender, age and ethnicity.

Gender	Percentage	Number
Female	76.2%	1697
Male	22.1%	492
Not known	1.8%	39

Age	Percentage	Number
9 or under	0.9%	21
10 – 17	1.2%	26
18 – 24	24.0%	534
25 – 30	20.3%	453
31 -39	24.9%	554
40 – 65	25.0%	557
66 or over	2.1%	46
Not known	1.7%	37

Ethnicity	Percentage	Number
White	45.0%	987
Mediterranean	6.2%	135
African/Caribbean	42.1%	923
Pakistani, Indian, Nepalese, Maldivian, Sri Lankan, Bangladeshi, or any other (South) Asian	3.6%	78
Chinese, Japanese, or South-East Asian	1.5%	32
Arabic, Egyptian, Tunisian, Algerian or Maghreb	1.1%	25
Unknown	0.5%	48

Table 2: Those accused of domestic abuse by gender age and ethnicity

The total number of accused in 2011 was 784. The tables below give a full breakdown of gender, age and ethnicity.

Gender	Percentage	Number
Female	18.4%	148
Male	81.6%	656

Age	Percentage	Number
10 – 17	1.8%	14
18 – 24	27.0%	212
25 – 30	18.5%	145
31 -39	24.6%	193
40 – 65	27.7%	217
66 or over	0.4%	3

Ethnicity	Percentage	Number
White	44.1%	346
Mediterranean	6.0%	46
African/Caribbean	42.7%	335
Pakistani, Indian, Nepalese, Maldivian, Sri Lankan, Bangladeshi, or any other (South) Asian	4.3%	34
Chinese, Japanese, or South-East Asian	1.5%	12
Arabic, Egyptian, Tunisian, Algerian or Maghreb	1.1%	9
Unknown	0.3%	2

In 2011, this is the number of domestic abuse offences which took place in the following wards:

Table 3

Ward	Percentage	Numbers
Peckham	6.9%	143
Camberwell Green	6.8%	141
Grange	6.5%	135
Newington	6.4%	132
Livesey	6.2%	128
The Lane	5.9%	122
East Walworth	5.8%	121
Nunhead	5.7%	119
Rotherhithe	5.3%	109
South Bermondsey	5.2%	108
Faraday	5.1%	106
Riverside	5.0%	104
Chaucer	4.6%	95
Cathedrals	4.4%	91
Brunswick Park	3.5%	72
Surrey Docks	3.3%	68
South Camberwell	3.2%	67
College	3.1%	64
East Dulwich	2.3%	48
Peckham Rye	2.2%	46
Village	1.8%	38

Solace Advocacy & Support Service – Southwark Monitoring Report: April 2 – May 2, 2012

Table 4: How do victims get referred to support services? Numbers and sources of referrals

Agency	Number (#)
Victim Support	50
Children's Services	17
Southwark Psychological Therapies Service	2
Self	16
CAB	7
LB of Southwark	4
Police	24

WiseGem	1
CAHMS	1
Kappa Project	1
One Housing Group	2
Housing Options	2
Schools	1
GALOP	1
Refuge	14
Bede House	5
Total	149

Table 5: Numbers and types of abuse

Type of VAWG	Number (#)
Emotional/psychological	62
Financial	25
HBV	0
Physical	129
Rape	0
Sexual	18
Sexual Assault	0
Verbal	29
Controlling behaviour	34
Stalking & Harassment	28
Unknown	0
Total*	325

*Multiple Experiences

Table 6: Domestic Violence sanctioned detection rate, comparative data for the London boroughs in Southwark's MSG (most similar group) of community safety partnerships.

Borough	DV SD rate 2011/12
Kensington & Chelsea	50%
Camden	48%
Greenwich	47%
Hackney	47%
Islington	44%
Tower Hamlets	44%
Lambeth	40%
Haringey	39%
Brent	37%
Southwark	36%

Analysis

23. Officers advised the sub-committee that we need to be careful about jumping to conclusions about domestic abuse statistics. Domestic violence is a notoriously “hidden” crime which it is difficult to quantify. A rise in “incidents” may be the result of greater awareness of support. Also, local area statistics can be skewed by individual repeat offenders.
24. Currently there are around 20 – 25 victims per month who are classified ‘at high risk.’
25. One in every five recorded crimes in Southwark is classified as violence against the person (10,553 reports in 2010/11). One in every four of these violent crimes is linked to domestic abuse (2,419 in 2010/11).
26. In Southwark, 40% of Merlin¹ referrals are domestic abuse related; 30% of these trigger initial assessments. In 2011, 225 cases were heard at the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), involving 254 children and young people.
27. Domestic Abuse incidents mainly occur in the 16 – 30 age range. Issues of relationship violence amongst young people rarely gets recorded. Young women with abusive experiences often find that the tolerance for abuse remains with them into adulthood.
28. In BME groups, there is a larger portion of women being effected and more work needs to be done to redesign more appropriate services around those communities. (See recommendations)
29. 83% of reported cases are from women, however there is a slight increase in reported cases where men are the victim and where parents and/or carers are also experiencing violence from children and young people.
30. It can take an average of 36 incidences of domestic abuse before a victim will call the police.
31. Clearly, the most striking statistic of those collected by the sub-committee is that showing Southwark’s low detection rate (36%) for Domestic Violence incidents when compared to similar inner London Boroughs. The reasons for this and possible solutions are pursued in the “Issues for further attention” section and the recommendations.

Early performance indicators on SOLACE contract

32. Significantly, Solace’s monthly output statistics produced on the number of cases it is coming across are not matching the official statistics 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.

Interview with Jain Lemom (Mayor’s Office for Police and Crime)

33. Jain Lemom, from the Mayor’s Office for Police and Crime (MOPC), told the sub-committee that she had been working on the Mayor’s integrated strategy on all forms of violence against women and girls which included incidents of rape, sexual assault, honour based violence and female genital mutilation. The Mayor’s office strategy on domestic abuse covered a range of issues including refuge provision, the police and encouraging witnesses and victims to go through the court system, to help bring the perpetrators of domestic abuse to justice.

¹ Merlin is a report produced by the Metropolitan Police notifying local authorities and agencies of violent incidents in the home where children may be affected.

34. Jain Lemom went on to inform Members of some of the problems she had encountered during her work on the issues of domestic abuse. She said that the London Council budgets had been reduced to help tackle this problem and that the Home Office (HO) was streamlining its service by encouraging women who might be experiencing domestic violence to go to a website to find information and support. She went on to say that this service might not be able to offer much to women who did not speak English or did not have access to the internet. This possibly was not the best approach to encourage vulnerable women to come forward.
35. Jain Lemom went on to say that there needed to be better training for the police when dealing with call outs and that more needed to be done to look after witnesses and victims going through the court system to help support them through a stressful time. Work also needed to be enhanced with all partner agencies and all boroughs to help raise awareness and improve the working of the systems overall.
36. Jain Lemom responded to Members' and officers' concerns by saying that the London crime reduction board, the police and the Mayor were all looking at what could be done about the perpetrator attrition rate. She was happy to work with Southwark in the future and offered to supply examples of good practice from other boroughs to the scrutiny sub-committee. The Chair thanked her for attending the meeting.

Visit to Domestic Abuse Advocacy and Support Centre

37. On 22 June 2012 the chair of the sub-committee visited Southwark's Advocacy and Support Centre operated by Solace. The visit included an in-depth interview with the Service Coordinator, a tour of the centre and a group discussion with staff providing services. Unfortunately, on the day of the visit, it was not possible to speak to any victims of domestic abuse.
38. On behalf of the sub-committee, the chair would like to put on record his thanks to the staff for taking the time out to contribute to the scrutiny process. The visit was extremely valuable in providing useful information regarding the provision of domestic abuse services.
39. Issues which came out of the visit are included in the "Issues for further attention" section below and also in the report's recommendations.

Issues to be addressed

40. **Conviction rate** - Southwark's conviction rate for domestic abuse incidents is far too low. It is 14% below Kensington and Chelsea, 12% below Camden and 11% below Greenwich and Hackney. During the scrutiny process two key reasons for this became apparent.
41. **Dedicated domestic violence court** - Firstly, the slowness of the criminal justice process. Victims are often afraid of reprisals from the perpetrator and/or can be financially dependent on their abuser. Currently, perpetrators are aware that if they pleaded not guilty to a crime, the likelihood that the victim would go through with court action resulting in a trial, was not high. Perpetrators understood that the further ordeal of a court case was not something that victims wished to face and that they often dropped out of any prosecution. Members and officers felt that it was very important that something was done about this. If the court process is too slow, there is a much higher chance that the crime will go unpunished and that the perpetrator will be free to abuse again. One way of addressing this issue is to introduce a dedicated domestic violence court. This is pursued further in the recommendations.

42. **Placing a domestic abuse caseworker with police** - Secondly, victims of domestic abuse do not always feel empowered to engage with the criminal justice system. Rightly or wrongly, they often feel that the process is skewed against them and that they will not be supported. As a result, they will report incidents, but not pursue justice. In other boroughs (such as Kensington and Chelsea) certain pilot schemes have been very successful in empowering the victims to pursue justice more regularly. In particular, having a domestic abuse support worker on-site in the police station to speak to the victim about the support that is available to them at the point that they are reporting the crime. This helps the victim to understand the process and become aware that they are not on their own.
43. **Women of indeterminate immigration status** - There are big challenges to provide services for women with indeterminate immigration status, who have no recourse to public funds. Often there are no community connections which makes vulnerable women 'hard to reach.' Solace will be expected to do a substantial amount of outreach work. Officers within the Housing department discussed the difficulties of acting on cases of reported incidents, as this often required cooperation with private landlords, other boroughs, legal services and had to be in accordance with legislation. Currently measures included in legislation impacted badly on women with indeterminate immigration status. They had no recourse to public funds to aid them, and officers and Members acknowledged that this situation needed urgent change.
44. **Training on how to deal with domestic abuse reports** - Another key issue is training for staff across a wide range of agencies (including police) on how to deal with a report of domestic abuse. There are varying levels of training across the council and other agencies and these need to be addressed. The new Solace contract does provide for a training scheme to address this issue, but there has been some delay in getting the domestic abuse training courses into the work programme of different departments and agencies. This needs to be sorted out as a matter of urgency.
45. **Risk Assessment Criteria** - A connected issue relates to the risk assessment criteria for domestic abuse being applied by staff working for agencies across the borough. 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 outdated or inadequate risk assessment criteria. This posed a danger because it meant there was higher risk of the wrong assessment being made, and it made the process more bureaucratic because it meant dedicated domestic violence caseworkers were then having to re-assess a high number of cases. The risk assessment which should be used is the Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA) risk identification checklist. This is a widely accepted risk assessment used across other boroughs and agencies.
46. **Slowness of response from 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. A small proportion of those victims even found themselves on the streets eventually as a result of delays in the process of re-allocating housing. Once the victim has been removed from immediate danger, the process tends to slow down and take less of a priority.
47. **Ensuring perpetrators attend 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". In the case of council housing tenants, Southwark council needs to give these perpetrators greater encouragement to attend these courses. One option would be to make attendance on the programme a condition of continued tenancy.
48. **Staffing levels in support service** - On the visit to the Southwark/Solace Advocacy Support Service another issue which arose was staffing levels. Staff understood that, as a

result of severe cuts in funding from central government, resources were tight. However, there was concern that the number of cases per caseworker was very high and that this was making the provision of support to the victims of domestic abuse more difficult than it would otherwise be. The waiting list for Counsellor focussed on domestic violence is very long. Staff expressed concern that victims (particularly of psychological abuse) were having to wait long periods of time to access these services. This issue is pursued in the final recommendations.

49. **Ensuring staff take responsibility for domestic abuse** - All staff who work with someone who discloses domestic abuse should ensure that the appropriate referrals are made and that they take any necessary action to ensure the safety of the victim and any children. Staff should ensure they have the knowledge and skills to do this. Domestic abuse is a serious issue and we should ensure the best standards of service provision.
50. **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 this needs to be addressed urgently.

Recommendations

1. **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 reported 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.
2. **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.
3. **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, voluntary and community sector and councillors) and professionals (social workers, Area Housing Staff, 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.
4. **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.
5. **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 make 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 same approach could be taken with leaseholders, where the council is the freeholder.
6. **Victims of indeterminate Immigration status, no recourse to public funds.** The council does respond to those high risk victims with no recourse through the 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.
7. **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.

8. **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.
9. **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.
10. **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
11. **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.
12. **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 this needs to be addressed urgently.
13. **Additional security scheme** – Given that continued accommodation is such a crucial issue for the victims of domestic violence, consideration should be given to setting up a scheme which supports victims to remain in their homes where this is appropriate. The scheme should assist with security measures for the homes of victims of domestic violence.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Work Programme

15 October 2012	Cllr Claire Hickson, Communities & Economic Development Risk assessment/management of large regeneration projects Allotments?
12 November 2012	Cllr Peter John, Leader (and Regeneration - North) Cllr Veronica Ward, Regeneration - South
3 December 2012	Cllr Richard Livingstone, Finance & Resources Report back on resident involvement?
7 January 2013	Budget?
4 February 2013	Briefing on shadow health & well-being board?
11 March 2013	
15 April 2013	
7 May 2013	

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OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2012-13****AGENDA DISTRIBUTION LIST (OPEN)****NOTE:** Original held by Scrutiny Team; all amendments/queries to Peter Roberts Tel: 020 7525 4350

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