

Scrutiny review scoping proposal

1 What is the review?

Mini review into Domestic Abuse in families.

Background

In August this administrative year 2021 /22 the Health and Social Care Commission completed a review , spanning two years , on 'Mental Health Inequalities of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Children and Young People'..

Partly as a result of that review, and evidence that Domestic Abuse had risen during the pandemic and was a significant risk factor for poor mental health in children and young people, the commission decided to delve further and hear from community groups during the remainder of the administrative year, and undertake a mini review focused on domestic abuse in families.

This is an extract from the previous report, summarizing evidence from officers on Domestic Abuse:

Domestic abuse (DA) is defined as any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behavior, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can include, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial, and emotional. Witnessing Domestic Abuse is an Adverse Childhood Experience that has the potential to negatively impact on children's mental and physical health throughout their life course.

Southwark has one of the highest volumes of DA in London, with very high levels of referrals to our specialist domestic abuse service. There has been generally rising demand over the last several years, although there was a small reduction in demand prior to lockdown. Since the start of the pandemic, there has been a significant increase in demand. For the period April 20 to March 21 the service saw a 21% increase in referrals compared to the same period the previous year (2879 against 2373 previously). We are yet to see any downturn in demand, referrals remain at an extremely high level; the period January to March 2021 saw 748 referrals to the service. This represents a 25% increase on the same period in 2020 (598 referrals). The average monthly number of referrals for FY 20/21 (April 2020 to March 2021) was 240, a 31% increase on the monthly average of 198 during FY 19/20. The number of referrals received from victims aged 16 to 25 also increased significantly, by 46%.

The increase in referrals was largely driven by a dramatic increase in high-risk referrals. In line with this, there was a corresponding increase in referrals to MARAC. The Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is coordinated by Southwark Council and meets fortnightly to provide a multi-agency response to high-risk cases of domestic abuse. During the period 28 April 2020 to 4 May 2021, Southwark MARAC heard 831cases, this compares to

674 in the same period the previous year, an increase of 23%.

Children's social care recorded a 20% increase in contacts relating to domestic abuse in the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 (2,350), when compared to the previous year (1,956). Whilst referrals for domestic abuse increased by 31%, from 594 to 779. This in the context of a 13% reduction in the total number of contacts received, and a 2% reduction in referral.

Nationally NSPCC reported that contacts to their helpline about the impact of domestic abuse on children increased by 32% since the start of the lockdown, to an average of one an hour. In May 2020, the helpline received its highest number of contacts about domestic abuse since 2016 when the current recording method began.

A report by Oxford and Manchester Universities suggests that child to parent violence has also significantly increased since lockdown measures were put in place. They found that the number of child to parent violent episodes increased by 70%, and that 69% of practitioners surveyed, said they had seen an increase in referrals for child to parent violence.

The commission heard that the council recognised very quickly the need to adapt the delivery of services including domestic abuse services during lockdown, moving from face to face to delivery via online and remote means. Additional funding has been put in place for two DA workers, to increase telephone capacity and support for high-risk victims. A communications campaign was also delivered across Southwark to raise awareness of domestic abuse and how to seek help.

The new Safe Space project was launched in February 2021. The initiative provides confidential rooms in a range of settings where survivors of domestic abuse can access information and make contact with specialist services. The scheme is currently operating across the network of Children and Family Centers, at more than 15 primary and secondary schools and the Tessa Jowell Health Hub. Further rollout of the scheme will include places of worship, community centers, council buildings and other primary care services.

A new group service has also been delivered to support parents where there is child to parent abuse and extra support has been provided to children in refuges. Longer term there are calls for the government to increase the profile and funding for domestic abuse.¹

¹ Information taken from the Health and Social Care 'Mental Health Inequalities of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Children and Young People' report, August 2021.

2 What outcomes could realistically be achieved? Which agency does the review seek to influence?

The review will seek to better protect victims of domestic abuse within Southwark, and influence the Cabinet lead, Cllr Evelyn Akoto, Councillor Leanne Werner; Deputy Cabinet Member for Domestic Abuse, council officers, the Police and Probation Service.

3 When should the review be carried out/completed? I.e. does the review need to take place before/after a certain time?

March 2022.

4 What format would suit this review? (e.g. full investigation, q&a with executive member/partners, public meeting, one-off session)

This will be a mini review. The review will be primarily carried out by investigation, research, and a one off roundtable with community groups and stakeholders. In support of this the lead cabinet member, deputy cabinet member and Safeguarding executive will be interviewed / invited to contribute.

5 What are some of the key issues that you would like the review to look at?

- The increase in domestic abuse in Southwark and how to reduce and mitigate.
- The impact of domestic abuse on children, young people, and families.
- Work with children and young people when they are abusing.
- Work with adult perpetrators to reduce offending.
- Responses from the Council and the national government to the rise in domestic abuse during Covid-19 lockdowns.
- How community groups are responding to Domestic Abuse.
- How the police, including specialised services, are responding holistically to Domestic Abuse, families and children and young people who may be perpetrating.
- How the partners are working together to assist and protect victims and reduce offending.

6 Who would you like to receive evidence and advice from during the review?

- Local domestic abuse charities in Southwark: see below table.
- Community Safety officers who lead and commission Domestic Abuse services
- Solace Women’s Aid. Commissioned by Southwark Council to deliver its comprehensive Domestic and Sexual Abuse support service to Southwark residents, including a perpetrator programme.
- YUVA Project (Delivered by DVIP), commissioned by the council to work with young people (age 11 – 18) who have been abusive to their parents/carers and in their close relationships. They help young people to look at their abusive behaviour and find safe, non-abusive alternatives.
- Children’s Services (Family Early Help)
- Probation Service, specifically the in-house programme for offenders who perpetrators
- Police, including specialised services for DA.
- Councillor Leanne Werner; Deputy Cabinet Member for Domestic Abuse and the Cabinet lead, Cllr Evelyn Akoto
- Southwark Safeguarding chair and executive

Please see below a list of VAWG voluntary sector groups. Ones highlighted the ones are known to be currently or previously working in Southwark

Organisation	What they do	More information
Aaina Women’s Group	The aim of this project is to work towards the empowerment and self-development of women through the provision of a drop in service and a programme of workshops and community based courses.	https://communitysouthwark.org/organisations-venues/organisations/aaina-womens-group
Ashiana Network	Provide housing and support to BMER women and girls experiencing domestic violence and sexual violence. Ashiana runs three refuges; two specifically for women aged 16-25 fleeing forced	http://www.ashiana.org.uk/

	marriage.	
Asian Women's Resource Centre	Specialist women's organisation providing support services to BME women and children who have experienced or are at risk of domestic abuse	www.asianwomencentre.org.uk
Bede House Starfish Project	Offers advice and support to people affected by Domestic Violence, resident in Southwark.	https://bedehouse.org.uk
Deafhope	Supports deaf victims of domestic and sexual violence	http://www.deaf-hope.org/
FORWARD	The Foundation for Women's Health, Research and Development, (FORWARD) is an African Diaspora women's campaign and support charity. Their focus is the elimination of FGM among affected African communities.	http://www.forwarduk.org.uk/
Halo Project	Provides advice and support to victims of honour based violence and forced marriage	https://www.haloproject.org.uk/
Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation	IKWRO provides specialist services to support Iranian, Kurdish, Afghan, Arab and Turkish women and girls subjected to 'honour' based violence (HBV), forced marriages (FM), child marriages and female genital mutilation (FGM).	www.ikwro.org.uk
IMECE Women's Centre	Woman only organisation supporting BMER women, particularly Turkish, Kurdish and	www.imece.org.uk

	Turkish Cypriot women to improve the quality of their lives. Assists women victims of Violence against Women and Girls through provision of a wide range of services in a safe, secure and women only space.	
Karma Nirvana	A national helpline to support victims in immediate danger of forced marriage and HBV. Karma Nirvana also offers HBV training to professionals.	karmanirvana.org.uk
Latin American Women's Rights Services	LAWRS is human rights, feminist organisation pursuing "equal rights and social justice for all Latin American women and migrant women in the UK".	www.lawrs.org.uk
LGBT Domestic Abuse Partnership (DAP)	DAP is a way for LGBT survivors of domestic abuse to get the maximum amount of help with a minimum amount of hassle. The DAP is open to any LGBT person experiencing domestic violence who is living or working in London. The DAP is made up of 4 LGBT agencies who each provide different services for LGBT survivors of domestic abuse.	http://lgbtdap.org.uk
Men's Advice Line	Confidential helpline for men experiencing domestic violence from a partner or ex-partner (or from other family members).	http://www.mensadvice.org.uk/

National Domestic Violence Helpline	The National Domestic Violence Helpline is a freephone 24 hour helpline which provides advice and support to women and can refer them to emergency accommodation.	0808 2000 247
Nia	Provides services for women, children and young people who have experienced gender based violence. This includes a specialist refuge for DA survivors with problematic substance misuse.	www.niaendingviolence.org.uk
Palladin	Paladin is a trauma-informed service established to assist high risk victims of stalking in England and Wales.	https://paladinservice.co.uk/
Pecan – Southwark Women’s Space	A women only space offering advice and support on a range of issues including domestic abuse	www.pecan.org.uk
Rape Crisis	Provides a national helpline and rape crisis centres to victims of rape and sexual assault.	https://rapecrisis.org.uk/
Refuge	A national charity providing accommodation and advice and support to victims of domestic abuse	https://www.refuge.org.uk/
SOLACE Women’s Aid	Commissioned by Southwark Council to deliver its comprehensive Domestic and Sexual Abuse support service to Southwark residents.	www.solacewomensaid.org/
Somali Integration	Women’s worker providing advice and	http://sidauk.org/

and Development Association	support to Somali women resident in Southwark	
Southall Black Sisters	Support and advice to Black (Asian and African-Caribbean) women who experience gender related violence.	www.southallblacksisters.org.uk
Tender	Promotes healthy relationships based on equality and respect. Using theatre and the arts, they engage young people in violence prevention. They work in schools, youth centres, pupil referral units, offices and healthcare settings.	http://tender.org.uk/
Victim Support	Provides support and advocacy to victims of domestic abuse in Southwark as part of the MOPAC Pan London Domestic Abuse Service	https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/
Women and Girls Network	Supports women and girls affected by all forms of gendered violence including childhood sexual abuse, domestic violence, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, prostitution (including trafficking and sexual exploitation), rape/gang rape, honour based violence and war crimes.	www.wgn.org.uk
YUVA Project (Delivered by DVIP)	Yuva works with young people (age 11 – 18) who have been abusive to their parents/carers and in their close	https://dvip.org/yuva-service.htm

relationships. They help young people to look at their abusive behaviour and find safe, non-abusive alternatives.

7 Any suggestions for background information? Are you aware of any best practice on this topic?

- Report by Oxford and Manchester University; <https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/news/2020-08-18-launch-report-child-parent-violence-during-pandemic/>.
- NSPCC sources; <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/about-us/news-opinion/2020/Calls-about-domestic-abuse-highest-on-record-following-lockdown-increase/>. / <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/about-us/news-opinion/2020/domestic-abuse-calls-rise2/>.
- National Government response; <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/domestic-abuse-and-covid-19-a-year-into-the-pandemic/>.
- NYT article; <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/06/world/coronavirus-domestic-violence.html>.
- Impact on Children and Young People; <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/car.2649>.
- Also in regards to children and young people; <https://capmh.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13034-020-00347-1>.
- Social Care Institute; <https://www.scie.org.uk/care-providers/coronavirus-covid-19/safeguarding/domestic-violence-abuse>.
- BBC report; <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-56491643>.
- University of Essex report; <https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/blog/2020/08/18/what-are-the-effects-of-lockdown-and-recession-on-domestic-violence>.
- NSPCC report; <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/2246/isolated-and-struggling-social-isolation-risk-child-maltreatment-lockdown-and-beyond.pdf>.
- Government work on tackling perpetrators <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-bill-2020-factsheets/tackling-perpetrators>
- Drive Project <http://driveproject.org.uk/>

8 What approaches could be useful for gathering evidence? What can be done outside committee meetings?

e.g. verbal or written submissions, site visits, mystery-shopping, service observation, meeting with stakeholders, survey, consultation event

Verbal and/or written submissions from external actors, bodies and organisations, cabinet members and officers. A roundtable with stakeholders.

