

Health and Social Care Scrutiny Commission

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Commission held on Wednesday 2 February 2022 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G02A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT:

Councillor David Noakes
Councillor Dora Dixon-Fyle MBE
Councillor Maria Linforth-Hall
Councillor Sandra Rhule

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT:

Cabinet lead, Cllr Evelyn Akoto, Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing.
Councillor Leanne Werner; Deputy Cabinet Member for Domestic Abuse

OFFICER SUPPORT:

David Quirke-Thornton, Strategic Director, Children's & Adults Services
Sharon Ogden, Safer Communities Team Manager
Jenny Brennan, Assistant Director Family Early Help & Youth Justice
Julie Timbrell, Scrutiny Project Manager

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Victoria Olisa and Bill Williams.

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

There were none.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

Cllr Martha Linforth - Hall, said she would be giving a report on her work as Director of Su Mano Amiga for the item on Domestic Abuse in Families.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

5. INTERVIEW WITH THE INDEPENDENT SAFEGUARDING CHAIR

The Independent Safeguarding Board Chair, Anna Berry, of Southwark Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) and Southwark Safeguarding Adults Board (SSAB) introduced the work of the partnership boards.

The chair then invited questions and the Independent Chair addressed these with support from the Safeguarding Executive:

- David Quirke-Thornton - Strategic Director of Children's and Adults Services, Southwark Council
- Clair Kelland - D/Supt, Public Protection, MPS
- Sam Hepplewhite - Place-Based Director (Southwark), NHS SEL CCG

Commission members then asked the following questions:

- **What has been the impact on mental health of children during the pandemic?**

The risks to children have changed .The partnership have learnt about risks outside of the home, and how important it is to consider and engage with schools, families and the community. There is a need for good connectivity. Extra familiar harm is an important feature of last 18 months. There is an adolescent sub group to look at themes of exploitation including CSE, serious youth violence, as well as the intersection with Domestic Abuse. This also includes looking at Peer on Peer abuse. The 'Everyone invited' website had a significant number of hits, many from independent schools in Southwark, so our work includes linking with these schools.

The Strategic Director added that hospital staff in A & E and other front line partners have highlighted the intensity and fragility of some relationships during lockdown. Keeping schools open became become very important. Southwark had already opened the NEST – and there was outreach to schools and the council provided some open access services. In some cases we were reminded how resilient our children were. The laptops the council provided enabled many children to engage with learning. There were also children in Barry House (asylum seekers) who accessed school which really helped. Lockdown impacted in different ways as not all people started from the same place, and poverty added to existing strains.

- **Members asked about bullying, grooming, radicalisation and forced marriages which do occur in Southwark and asked how this is being addressed through training, particularly given the strain on staff through the pandemic.**

The Independent Chair said there is training and with an evaluation of the impact. The 'learning hub' addresses training, as well as more broadly communicating and effectiveness. Rather than looking at issues and data in isolation the Safeguarding Partnership conduct deep dives, and look at interrelated issues and arrangements and how these work for people.

- **The Commission asked about Safeguarding of children during the pandemic and elder abuse.**

Member were told that alerts were as high, if not higher , for elder abuse which was reassuring in a way as it indicated that abuse was not were not hidden.

There are a 100 more child protection plans in place, which is indicative of pandemic pressures , including schools raising matters.

- **Members asked about FGM; commenting that this is still being perpetrated in Africa and unfortunately even in Southwark. She asked about training generally and if there more councillors can do on this, particularly thinking about the new cohort to be elected and training opportunities?**

The Place-Based Director NHS SEL CCG responded that training was kept up to date during the pandemic and some extra opportunities provided on FGM. There has been a big push to raise awareness of FGM as health professionals are at the front line. Health workers see people for often other issues but then it can become clear there are other issues and potentially FGM. The training was for broad range of staff including auxiliary, along with the cascading of information on how to act. It was agreed that training for the new cohort of councillors is an opportunity and members said that previous training has been very useful in alerting councillors to FGM.

- **The Commission asked if such as large boards works.**

Members were assured that there is active contributions from everybody. There are sub groups and task and finish groups. People are also very engaged. There is a strong focus on learning, in particular, and looking at themes through a variety of means especially places and issues where the partnership can make a difference.

- **The Safeguarding Board representatives were asked about the conversion rate to investigation.**

The Strategic Director said there is a conversation with people about outcomes, based on the 'making safeguarding personal' approach. Sometimes a mediation approach is better than intervention and protection – while sometimes accusations call for an investigation.

6. DOMESTIC ABUSE IN THE FAMILY

The following contributed to the session:

Community Safety officers who lead and commission Domestic Abuse services	Sharon Ogden, Safer Communities Team Manager
Children's Services (Family / Early Help)	Jenny Brennan, Assistant Director Family Early Help & Youth Justice
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.	Catarina Sousa, Area Manager (South), Domestic Abuse services, DVIP, a division of Richmond Fellowship Michelle Ellingham, Yuva service manager
Probation Service, specifically the in-house programme for offenders who perpetrators 5 minute presentation on the work done by Probation for perpetrators of Domestic Abuse. Chantal Foster. Head of Probation Delivery Unit (Southwark)	Chantal Foster, Head of Probation Delivery Unit (Southwark)
Police, providing briefing and attending, including specialised services for DA.	Clair Kelland - D/Supt, Public Protection, MPS
Solace	Gabriella Bogdan - Solace Advocacy & Support Service (SASS) Colin Fitzgerald – Solace perpetrator work
Cabinet leads for Community Safety and Domestic Abuse.	Cabinet lead, Cllr Evelyn Akoto, Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing. Councillor Leanne Werner; Deputy Cabinet Member for Domestic Abuse
Bede House StarFish Domestic Abuse Project	Nicole Hooper (Deputy manager)
Su Mano Amiga	Cllr Martha Linforth –Hall, Director of Su Mano Amiga and member of the commission

The chair invited participants to give an overview of their role and also to put forward recommendations for Southwark to improve our practice in tackling Domestic Abuse in Families.

Sharon Ogden, Safer Communities Team Manager, gave a brief overview of her report circulated with the agenda. She suggested more early intervention, as services tend to work at crisis point, and also more work with perpetrators - again using an early intervention model.

Jenny Brennan, Assistant Director Family Early Help & Youth Justice gave an overview of her report. In terms of further work she spoke about the challenge of finding a model to work with fathers which enables them to stay engaged as parents while keep children and families safe. This includes work to support people to manage conflict better, rather than causing harm. The service want fathers to parent their children, however the Assistant Director said there is a need to for behaviour change and to provide effective support for fathers who are not suitable for the DVIP programme either owing to lack of acceptance of domestic abuse behaviour, or who are unable to engage with the 26 weeks programme. She suggested a targeted engagement programme could build on the work currently undertaken by the fathers group work programme.

In addition there are Mental Health issues and potential cycles of abuse, where teenagers can trigger mothers and act out poor conflict behaviour, which are also a challenge.

She would like to see increased engagement of schools with Project Encompass and promotion as part of the Team around the Schools approach.

Catarina Sousa, YUVA Area Manager and Michelle Ellingham, Yuva service manager explained that YUVA work with young people aged 11 – 18, or up to 25 years old if special needs. They work with children and young people who act out to attempt to prevent further perpetrator behaviour later down the line. There is a 10 week programme for young people, and an 8 week programme for parents. The families are often complex, with children with special needs including Autistic Spectrum Disorder. The service finds it tougher to engage with fathers, and often it is mothers who are most involved.

YUVA would like to extend their service and days worked in the borough, and also have more extensive involvement with partners on the ground. Regular conversations would be good, not just family specific discussions.

Chantal Foster, Head of Probation Delivery Unit (Southwark) gave a presentation published in the agenda. She spoke about the Probation service's Building Better Relationships which looks at how to manage feelings and behaviour. It is a training programme delivered over 5 and a half months. The course is aimed at adult male perpetrators convicted of an Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) related offence against a female partner, who present with a moderate or high risk of committing future IPV offences. There is also partner link workers who provide support and look at the risk

to people in a relationship with participants.

In terms of recommendations she said she would like to be able to put plans in place to do a handover to community groups of participants who have completed the programme so that support remains in place once people have exited the programme.

Clair Kelland - D/Supt, Public Protection, Police, provided a presentation, published with the agenda. This show the increases in Domestic Abuse during the pandemic, including a rise in parents and sons, with a significant 50 % increase in sons. She outlined how the police, including specialised services, respond to Domestic Abuse in families, including when young people may be perpetrating. The definition of Domestic Abuse excludes perpetrators under the age of 16.

The police would like to see more work with under 16s and YUVA working more than the present 2 days a week in Southwark. She undertook to involve YUVA more in partnership work.

Gabriella Bogdan - Solace Advocacy & Support Service (SASS), outlined the work of Solace in Southwark, who are commissioned by the council to provide:

- Survivor advocacy and support
- Sanctuary scheme,
- 26 week Perpetrator Programme,
- Child therapy,
- Counselling,
- Survivor group work programme,
- Community training and awareness raising.

She recommended increased therapeutic support for children and also parents as the present provision is not sufficient.

Colin Fitzgerald spoke about Solace's perpetrator work. He noted that 78% of perpetrators come from postcodes SE1, SE15, SE16, and SE17. Solace deliver a structured perpetrator programme for 24 weeks.

He echoed comments by YUVA and the Probation Service on the importance of connectivity and locating Perpetrator programmes in the community, with these being one aspect of a community response. A research project with three boroughs had found connectivity to be crucial. Informal conversations are not happening enough with the pandemic so that is something that ought to be restarted.

He emphasised the importance of Trauma Informed response and the negative impact a lack of safety has on children. The commission's attention was drawn to the importance of Early Family Help and the [First 1000 Days](#) recommendations, a report by the Health & Social Care Select Committee, which addresses interventions to address the crucially important time period in a child life, from conception through to age 2.

The work of Dr Carlene Firmin, on contextual safeguarding, and particularly the importance of keeping teenagers safe between 3 – 6pm , and the work of Dr David Mandel , Safe and Together , work with fathers was referenced

He strongly recommend that the system makes the same demands of mothers as we make of fathers , as currently this is not symmetrical in social services . This would increase the accountability of fathers and signal to fathers their importance.

Nicole Hooper, Deputy Manager, Bede House spoke about their work. This focuses on small project work with families. There is a 12 week programme, as well as longer term work.

She agreed that there ought to be more partnership work and that there was not an equal level of accountability for male perpetrators and fathers, commenting that mothers get monitored and flagged if a father attends , but there is little consequence of men. She felt the emphasise ought to be ‘safe mother, safe children’.

The Bede House Deputy Manger referred to a service in Lewisham which works in primary schools.

She also endorsed Early Intervention and Trauma Informed responses

She recommended encouraging agency in women when they devise safety plans, as women will often act compliant to service providers.

Cllr Martha Linforth –Hall, Director of Su Mano Amiga and member of the commission spoke about Su Mano Amiga work with the Latin American community and Domestic Abuse. She said the community is often traumatised from conflict in the country of origin. During the first lockdown in March 2020 the phones calls went up significantly to about 24 – 26 a day, during a time when they could not deliver face to face work. Calls are now back down to 2/3 a day. She voiced concern about children who were stuck in situations where parents are fighting. Su Mano Amiga’s interventions have particularly focused on children’s wellbeing.

Councillor Leanne Werner; Deputy Cabinet Member for Domestic Abuse spoke about the new Domestic Abuse Bill that focus on breaking the cycle of violence and recognition that children need to be seen as victims not just witness .

She highlighted the work of a previous scrutiny review on Violence against Women and Girls and the importance that young people had given to relationship work in schools.

Cabinet lead, Cllr Evelyn Akoto, Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing said the Domestic Abuse needs to be challenged this at a society level. She highlighted

the importance of London wide work with domestic abuse survivors as people are often mobile across boroughs.

The chair then invited comments from members and the following points were made regarding recommendations the commission could make:

- Informing people about abuse and educating people what the many forms of abuse can look like - e.g. coercive control is important. The council could look more at relationship coaching, conflict resolution training, as well as the wider culture and opportunities to raise awareness of the consequences of abuse.
- A focus on engagement with fathers, and raising expectations around parenting
- Tackling unequal expectations and accountability for fathers
- Early intervention work in schools, including good practice in Lewisham
- Improving connectivity in the wider partnership
- Developing handover plans
- Increase support for teenagers and the presence of YUVA
- A Trauma informed approach.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

An additional meeting will be added, if possible, to consider evidence from unions for the workforce review.

The chair and the vice chair are in correspondence with officers regarding a letter from South London Refugee Association to the commission members regarding care leavers and work with trafficked children.