

Item No. 10.	Classification: Open	Date: 29 January 2013	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Response to recommendations from the Housing, and Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee on the Review of Services Relating to Domestic Violence and Abuse in Southwark	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Richard Livingstone, Finance, Resources and Community Safety	

FOREWORD – COUNCILLOR RICHARD LIVINGSTONE, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

Last year, the Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee carried out a review into Southwark's Domestic Violence and Abuse as the new service was being established. Their report was presented to Cabinet on 23 October.

Their review has been a timely and well-considered piece of work. As a result, much of its recommendations have since been implemented or are in the process of being put in place.

Domestic violence and abuse can be one of the most emotionally debilitating experiences a person can live through, and can happen to people of all backgrounds and ages. It can take many forms, not only physical violence but also emotional and financial abuse. Southwark Council is committed to doing all it can to tackle this problem and support its victims. We also welcome the statement by Southwark's new police Borough Commander for Southwark, John Sutherland, that this is one of his two highest personal priorities.

At the October meeting cabinet members also asked for information on the role of alcohol in domestic violence and abuse and this is included at the end of the report. Cabinet will be considering a new Alcohol Strategy in forthcoming weeks which will explore these issues further.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Cabinet note and agree the measures that the council has in place to respond to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommendations.
2. That Cabinet note in particular the information contained in this report about the impact of alcohol in respect of domestic violence and abuse.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. In 2010 the Children's and Families Trust (CFT), the Southwark Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) and the Safer Southwark Partnership (SSP) agreed to review domestic abuse service provision in the borough.

4. Issues identified in the review were:
 - Accessing domestic services was complicated and it was difficult for people to get the right service from the right agency
 - Services were not focused on those people who needed them the most
 - Independent domestic violence advocates (IDVAs) were in place but the level of support provided by the advocates wasn't always consistent
 - There was a lack of services for perpetrators
 - There was a perceived acceptability of domestic abuse in communities.
5. In December 2010 the principles for a new domestic abuse system were agreed. Since that time officers have worked to implement the system and there have been a number of improvements, including:
 - Investment in community initiatives to raise awareness of domestic abuse
 - Improvements to the multi agency risk assessment conference (MARAC), a partnership forum focusing on making high risk victims safe through bespoke risk management
 - Shared and regularly reviewed agreement on risk levels across agencies
 - Successfully securing European funding to support safe and healthy relationship education in schools.
6. A key element of the new system was the commissioning of one domestic abuse support service. Solace Women's Aid were commissioned and the service (Southwark Advocacy and Support Service) went live on 2 April 2012. The contract sets out a number of expectations of service improvement for Southwark residents, including:
 - A borough wide service, with a new centre for domestic violence and a single point of entry – one phone number, one email
 - 24/7 access to the service, with a 4 hour response time for high risk victims
 - Services for all male and female victims of domestic abuse
 - Two specialist support programmes for children and young people, with parallel workshops for mothers
 - A perpetrator programme
 - A service user forum
 - A volunteer programme, open to local residents
 - Access to specialist advice services, a counselling service and peer support programmes.
7. These expectations have been built in with no growth in budget, representing significant added value.
8. 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.
9. Cabinet considered the report and agreed that the recommendations be noted and Councillor Richard Livingstone, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Community Safety bring a report back to cabinet that responded to the overview and scrutiny committee.

10. Cabinet also asked that the report should also take into account the impact of alcohol in respect of domestic violence and abuse.

Recommendations of the Housing & Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee and responses

Recommendation

11. **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.

Response

12. The review of the previous service delivery mechanisms for domestic abuse recognised that data collection was patchy and inconsistent. Officers addressed this issue during the commissioning and design of the new service and have worked with SASS to collect data that is relevant and meaningful for service development. The recommendation of the OSSC is helpful in recognising the improvements that have been made.
13. However, both sets of statistics still have their own importance and relevance. The police data includes all cases where domestic abuse is reported or evident. SASS figures include all referrals from the police (and other agencies) but will also include self referrals. Not all clients who self refer to SASS will have reported to the police and not all police recorded domestic abuse cases will use SASS services.
14. Officers and SASS continue to work on further improving their data collection in order to identify trends within those accessing the service and continue to compare this information to other sets of statistical information available including census, and population data and police reported crime. It is important to use both to ensure the service is relevant for all that need to use it, recognising that domestic abuse is under reported.
15. Officers are also using both data sets to inform the Safer Southwark Partnership Strategic Assessment which is the tool the partnership uses to set priorities and allocate resources. Our methodology has been recognised as best practice.

Recommendation

16. **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.

Response

17. The recommendation for a dedicated domestic violence court is supported and would be a positive step forward for victims of domestic abuse. We also recognise that the value of such a specialist court can only be realised by improving the victim's journey through the whole criminal justice system. The current direction of travel for criminal justice agencies is to move away from specialist courts and there is currently insufficient expertise in the criminal justice and court progress. Recent changes in the organisation of the Crown Prosecution Service means that there are no longer special domestic violence prosecutors or dedicated borough leads. The council will continue to work together with partners to identify how we can best improve the criminal justice and court systems in 2013 to provide the best support throughout the investigation and criminal justice journey and monitor the impact of recent changes to the court systems.
18. A letter to local MPs highlighting the current challenges would be welcome. In addition the Cabinet Member for Finance Resources and Community Safety will be approaching the Ministry for Justice to press further for appropriate criminal justice services for victims.

Recommendation

19. **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.

Response

20. It is recognised that awareness raising is important so that domestic abuse is tackled and owned by all that come into contact with it and that all officers know what the next steps are. Ensuring that the roll out of training is not delayed is shared and will continue to be prioritised.
21. In the original SASS contract a number of domestic abuse awareness training sessions were built in. Two sessions have already been delivered with the other sessions scheduled for the last 3 months of 2012/13. These courses are designed to support staff who may come into contact with members of the public who are experiencing domestic abuse and to increase their confidence in dealing with the issue. Professionals highlighted above were prioritised for this training.
22. Officers from community safety have worked with colleagues from adults and children's services (prevention, inclusion and support) to secure additional funding to offer an enhanced training and prevention programme to include other priority groups as described above. Officers are currently working with SASS to

design the training programme for the specific groups and this will be delivered in early 2013.

23. Councillor training will also be available as part of this enhanced package.
24. The organisational development team and the community safety partnership service are working with SASS to design a domestic abuse e-learning package (similar to the Safeguarding e-learning package). This will be available to members of the public and community groups to sign up to on my learning source.

Recommendation

25. **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.

Response

26. Establishing domestic abuse champions across council services will make a significant improvement in responding to concerns of potential domestic abuse incidents. The Champions Training Programme aims to increase knowledge and confidence around good practice in relation to domestic abuse within a strategic and operational framework. This includes and will be underpinned by safeguarding, multiagency working and Information sharing specifically within a Southwark context. Equality and diversity will be integral to all elements of the training programme. The first course will be launched in January 2013.
27. There will be three courses this financial year and six courses in 2013/2014 with a maximum of 10 participants per course.
28. Officers will monitor closely the impact of this training.

Recommendation

29. **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.

Response

30. We are pleased to be able to offer a behaviour change programme as part of the new contract and welcome opportunities to use what leverage is available to encourage perpetrators to engage in these programmes.

31. Due to the complex nature of domestic abuse, options need to be considered on a bespoke, case by case basis. The council already looks to enforce existing tenancy conditions and where possible initiates possession proceedings if it has been agreed with the victim that that is their preferred option.
32. Focusing on the perpetrator offers further options for tackling this issue and encouraging council tenants who are perpetrators of domestic abuse to volunteer to take steps to make changes is important. Officers have organised for workers from the domestic violence intervention programme (DVIP) to attend housing officers' team meetings to encourage joint working to consider tenancy action. These will happen in January and February 2013.
33. The council will work with its partners to use all enforcement powers available in order to safeguard victims.
34. The perpetrator programme is not limited to council tenants alone and can receive referrals from leaseholders and owner occupiers. The programme received 21 referrals as of October 2012, 15 of which originated from the police.

Recommendation

35. **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.

Response

36. A direct approach to both Home Office ministers and the Mayor of London on these issues would assist greatly in resolving this challenging issue and is welcomed. Concerns over women who suffer domestic abuse and have no recourse to public funds has been a major issue for some time. However, this cannot be solved at a local authority level and has to be dealt with sensitively due to the complexities that exist. Nevertheless it needs to be resolved as it places increased pressure and demands on council and voluntary sector services who have limited options.
37. In response to the desk top review, adult and children's services have assessed the demand that is placed on council services from those without recourse to public funds and have taken decisions to establish a single, dedicated team to respond to this difficult issue. Community safety is working with adult and children's services and housing to deliver this bespoke, tailored council response that will bring together expertise and legal advice in order to safeguard the most vulnerable. The team will work closely with SASS and UKBA to ensure the needs of vulnerable women are considered.

Recommendation

38. **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.

Response

39. From November 2012 a SASS staff member has been based at the police station for a full day every fortnight. They carry out a variety of tasks but focus on first hand advice to police colleagues, advice for victims presenting at the police station, work with victims presenting to do withdrawal statements, encouraging victim impact statements and increasing the number of victims who received SASS support through the court process.
40. Officers will carry out a review in February 2013 to look into the outcomes of the co-location arrangements (for example increase on police referrals, increase on survivors supported through the court process, decrease on the number of survivors withdrawing statements, etc).

Recommendation

41. **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.

Response

42. 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.
43. 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

44. **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.

Response

45. There is an acknowledgement of the importance in having a bespoke action plan that meets the needs of the victim, whilst also addressing the level of risk that the victim and their immediate family may face whilst they remain in their current accommodation. The housing department has worked to improve their response to domestic abuse following on from the review of services undertaken by the council and partners:
- We promote the commissioned domestic abuse service (SASS) and the perpetrator behaviour change programme across our service access points
 - Awareness raising work was undertaken when SASS was launched and SASS continue to attend team meetings, as required
 - The housing department is playing a key role in designing SASS's enhanced training programme for champions, as detailed above
 - The housing department is now a key member of the multi agency risk assessment committee (MARAC), which focuses on the management of high risk cases
 - The sanctuary scheme exists for tenants who want to remain in their property. 38 Southwark tenants have been assisted by the Sanctuary scheme between April and September 2012.
 - Housing is working with community safety to improve internal mechanisms as they relate to domestic abuse e.g. temporary accommodation, management needs panel
 - Housing operations now attend the Safer Southwark partnership tasking group. Resident officers regularly attend ward panel meetings where crime reports and local policing priorities are discussed.
46. The protocol of the housing management needs panel already establishes the mechanisms for referral pathways into the new service and SASS feeds into the process by providing expert advice and information on risk.
47. SASS is responsible for the bespoke action plan for the victims. The council supports these action plans as much as possible, including use of the Sanctuary scheme, which has also been added to the SASS contract in order to bring further added value and continuity of service.
48. Officers are committed to bespoke, case by case assessments for both perpetrators and victims to best resolve the situation.
49. Through the review of domestic abuse services a memorandum of understanding between victims and the housing department was drawn up in order to compel victims to engage more fully with the process.
50. The housing department continue to consider domestic abuse in their programmed tenancy checks.

Recommendation

51. **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.

Response

52. The council recognises the importance in having the right level of resources to support victims of domestic abuse and will continue to work with Solace to achieve this, within the current financial constraints that the council has to work to.
53. The SASS service went live in April 2012 and has only had a relatively short time to bed in. Part of the tender and contract arrangements with SASS includes a clear understanding of the importance of both managing clients on a risk basis and ensuring that cases are brought to a point of closure through practical support as well as specialist intervention based on the risk.
54. Officers are monitoring the contract closely to ensure that the service is not over capacity but is also able to meet the additional capacity that has been generated by other council departments investing in the service.
55. In addition, the prevention, inclusion and supported housing team have recently transferred their domestic abuse budget to community safety partnership services (CSPS) in line with past recommendations that CSPS be the lead commissioner for all domestic abuse services.
56. This extra resource is being invested in preventative activity with a full time training coordinator to implement a comprehensive domestic abuse training programme as well as an additional part time caseworker (referenced above).

Recommendation

57. **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.

Response

58. The council recognise that housing options provide a critical role in terms of reports of domestic abuse and having well trained staff, carrying out bespoke risk based action planning is acknowledged as being crucial.
59. As part of the service design, council officers and SASS staff carried out extensive outreach activity with the housing options team. SASS staff attended a number of front line housing options and homelessness officers' team meetings to promote the new service and referral pathways.
60. Housing options is fully involved in the scoping and commissioning of the second element of the SASS contract in relation to training and the champions programme and will be fully involved on its roll out. SASS courses have been promoted far and wide amongst housing options staff.

Recommendation

61. **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.

Response

62. The council recognise the importance of providing facilities in Peckham to cater for the diverse needs of the area. So far the following locations for support meetings have been secured
- Peckham Police Station
 - Sunshine House Peckham
 - Rye Oak Primary School and Children’s Centre Peckham
 - South Bermondsey Children And Parents Centre
 - Dulwich Wood Nursery and Children’s Centre
 - 1st Place Children and Parent’s Centre Camberwell
63. In addition the housing options office, where victims can go to explore solutions to housing issues caused by domestic abuse, is also located in Peckham.
64. Officers have ensured that Peckham One Stop Shop and other key locations have all the literature on the new services both for victims and perpetrators.

Impact of alcohol in respect of domestic violence and abuse

65. Alcohol is estimated to be present in one-third of all domestic abuse incidents (Department of Health 2005). Alcohol was recorded to be a factor in 66 out of 202 Southwark MARAC referrals over the last 12 months (33 %).
66. It is important to note that alcohol abuse is not the cause of domestic abuse, though it is often used as an excuse for the violence. Research shows that people who are violent and abusive under the influence of alcohol or drugs are usually violent and abusive without it¹. Not all alcohol dependant persons are violent, and not all abusers have alcohol dependency issues. There are instances when a perpetrator is indeed alcohol dependent, but that is a separate issue to the abuse, i.e. he/she is an alcoholic and he/she has an abusive personality. The majority of abusers are not alcohol dependent but they use alcohol as part of the wider abusive behaviour. They are both separate issues which, although interact, need separate interventions.
67. Where domestic abuse already exists, research shows that alcohol or drug use can increase in the frequency of physical violence and abuse and injuries may be worse when the perpetrator is under the influence of a substance². However, domestic abuse is not just physical violence. Alcohol or drugs will not affect other forms of abusive behaviour, for example, controlling behaviour.

¹ Galvani 2006

² Brecklin 2002, Brookoff et al. 1997, Fals-Stewart 2003, Graham et al. 2004, Leonard and Quigley’s 1999, Leonard and Senchak 1996

68. Survivors and victims of domestic abuse may also use alcohol as a coping strategy. By the end of quarter two, 43 out of 794 clients referred to SASS had self declared alcohol issues. Drug and alcohol reduction and stabilisation is one of the service outcomes we monitor as part of the SASS contract. To date SASS have been performing within target levels, with 23 clients having achieved this outcome by quarter two.
69. When a victim is referred to SASS, a risk assessment is carried out, this identifies whether the client has any additional needs. For those clients where alcohol misuse related needs are identified, the issue is explored with the client and SASS workers will establish whether the client is already engaging with Foundation66, the council's commissioned specialist alcohol treatment service. If they are, and the client consents, SASS workers will liaise with their allocated Foundation66 worker. If they are not they will be offered a referral to this service and encouraged to seek treatment.
70. Clients with alcohol dependence issues find it more difficult to engage with support services due to their chaotic lifestyles. SASS staff are fully aware of this and they are more flexible with this client group when it comes to enforcing missed appointments. They also offer appointments at the same time and venue as their alcohol treatment appointments to make it easier for the clients to keep up to date with the treatment and support.
71. Southwark's drug and alcohol action team (DAAT) who commission Foundation 66, have undertaken a review of how all commissioned substance misuse treatment providers tackle the issue of domestic abuse. They implemented in full the recommendations contained in the Coordinated Action against Domestic Abuse (CAADA) report "*MARACs and the Substance Misuse Sector: Supporting the development of safe and effective responses with drug and alcohol agencies*".
72. The implemented recommendations consist of:
- Ensuring at least one staff member in each drug and alcohol agency is trained in domestic violence awareness and risk assessment
 - Ensuring each agency has the capacity to routinely enquire for domestic violence and/or use a common evidence based risk identification checklist
 - Drug & alcohol action team managers to nominate a substance use lead to attend the MARAC, and ensure that this staff member has appropriate training to fulfil the role. In our case the DAAT manager attends all MARAC meetings.
 - DAAT managers to ensure that the substance use lead on their MARAC communicates regularly with all agencies providing drug and alcohol services in their borough.

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Review of Services Relating to Domestic Violence and Abuse in Southwark - Report of Housing & Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee (Cabinet 23 October 2012)	160 Tooley Street, London SE1 http://modern.gov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/g4247/Public%20reports%20pack%20Tuesday%2023-Oct-2012%2016.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10	Eva Gomez 020 7525 7246

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Richard Livingstone, Finance Resources and Community Safety	
Lead Officer	Deborah Collins, Strategic Director of Environment and Leisure	
Report Author	Jonathon Toy, Head of Community Safety and Enforcement	
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