

## **Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**DATE:** 14th November, 2019

**Agenda Item No.**

**Title of the Report** Domestic Abuse a New Approach

**Ward(s)** All

**Portfolio Holders** Councillor Perry

### **Recommendation**

**That:** The Committee note the content of the report.

This report should be read alongside the presentation that will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14th November 2019.

Under the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) the Responsible Authorities have a duty to work together with other partners to protect the community from crime and help people feel safe. In addition there is a responsibility and duty to protect children, families and vulnerable adults from harm under the safeguarding multiagency protocols as set out in the "Working Together" guidance (2018).

With regards to domestic abuse this duty is primarily exercised by protecting the victims of domestic violence, adults and children, who are referred to the Walsall's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) following the arrest of a perpetrator and through referral of high risk cases to the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC).

The safeguarding responsibility falls into 2 main categories;

- Care and Support (primarily to the victims)
- Civil and Criminal Enforcement (primarily against the perpetrators)

Walsall Council Corporate Management Team decided in September 2018 to review its approach to domestic abuse with a refreshed leadership. Simon Neilson, supported by Adrian Roche, has led this review which is now starting to take shape under the Safer Walsall Partnership governance. The local response to domestic abuse has been embedded into Walsall's Community Safety Plan through the Violence Priority, being led by West Midlands Police with support from all partner agencies. This approach has been endorsed by the Safer Walsall Partnership on 21st October and

subsequently by Walsall Council Cabinet on 23rd October and at full Council on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

The Community Safety Plan is critical to the delivery of The Resilient Communities Model where the council will forge partnerships with local communities to integrate community protection, safety and enforcement through locally led solutions encouraging collaboration and personal responsibility. The Model has likewise been approved by full Council and it will build on community assets and local leadership to address local problems across the generations with the coordinated support of all partner agencies.

The approach to domestic abuse in recent years has been to focus on domestic abuse in the context of the Toxic Trio (domestic abuse, mental health, and substance misuse); while this has logical merit (and may be an area we return to in time) it has perhaps allowed for drift of focus and a lack of senior ownership.

The new approach to domestic abuse forms part of the thinking and ways of working as part of the Walsall Proud Programme. It represents an area where we recognise we can and must work smarter in optimising the commissioned investments whilst coordinating better partner agency's operational services to deliver better outcomes.

The governance of domestic abuse in Walsall was transferred from the Local Children's Safeguarding Board to The Safer Walsall Partnership in 2018. The Partnership's strategic approach has been hindered by the absence of a community safety manager, now resolved with an interim appointment. This has inevitably resulted in a delay at implementing a new approach.

The Council has spent several months reviewing the previous approach to domestic abuse, gathering different professional and partner perspectives. The Council's corporate management team (CMT) and each of the 4 directorate management teams (DMTs) have dedicated time to discuss how a different approach to working could result in better outcomes being delivered. Notwithstanding this commitment it is imperative, with reduced resources that we organise and coordinate our efforts better.

In parallel to understand the strengths and weaknesses in local service provision each statutory Safer Walsall Partner agency audited itself against the West Midlands Domestic Abuse Standards and the audit results have led to recommendations which will inform the Domestic Abuse Delivery Plan.

Areas for development have been identified as;

- Organisational policy and procedures require regular updates to reflect new legislation, contemporary service developments and evidence of good practice

- Domestic Abuse Training should be considered mandatory for health, housing and social care front line staff
- Bespoke Training for managers to recognise and know how to support staff who may be victims of domestic abuse
- Establish and better use of key data sets that can be shared to enhance intelligence and improve victim's experience

In the knowledge that his programme of work is not exclusively the responsibility of any single Board, communication and relationships with the other strategic partnership boards will require attention to canvass and build support, spread responsibility and bring influence and accountability.

With this in place the successful implementation of the Domestic Abuse Delivery Plan, embedded into the Community Safety Plan, will make a difference to victims of domestic abuse in Walsall. The challenge remains how to utilise the specialist knowledge of all the partners to focus on the strengths whilst not allowing the multi-agency approach to dilute the prioritisation, accountability and resulting operational implementation.

**Contact Officer:**

Simon Neilson  
Executive Director, Economy & Environment  
Walsall Council  
Civic Centre, Darwall Street, Walsall. WS1 1TP  
Email: [simon.neilson@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:simon.neilson@walsall.gov.uk)  
Telephone: 01922 652004

Adrian Roche  
Head of Social Inclusion  
Public Health  
Walsall Council, Civic Centre, WALSALL, WS1 1TP  
Telephone: 01922 653746  
Mobile: 07944 274504  
Email: [adrian.roche@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:adrian.roche@walsall.gov.uk)