

24 NOVEMBER, 2015

The Toxic Trio – Substance Misuse, Mental Health and Domestic Abuse

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Councillor C. Towe – Learning, Skills and Apprenticeships

1. Purpose

To inform members about the 'Toxic Trio', a term used to describe the issues of domestic abuse, mental ill health and substance misuse, specifically the extent of the situation in Walsall, the services in place currently and the initiatives to improve this in the future

2. What is the 'Toxic Trio'?

The 'Toxic Trio' is used to describe the issues of domestic abuse, mental ill health and substance misuse which have been identified as common features of families where harm to children has occurred. They are viewed as indicators of increased risk of harm to children and rarely exist in isolation.

Any one of these issues can negatively affect parenting capacity to meet children's needs; the co-existence of these issues can have much greater impact on parenting capacity and devastating effects and consequences on children and families.

Research in this area has shown overlap between these parental risk factors and cases of child death, serious injury and generally poorer outcomes for children across all ages. Not only are children at risk in these situations, but living in such conditions means that children and young people's life chances are also affected, with an impact on future learning, behaviour and health.

3. The extent of 'Toxic Trio' in Walsall

The complex interaction between this 'Toxic Trio' of issues makes analysis challenging. Our top three demands for Children's Social Care in Walsall are neglect, behavior and domestic abuse which research tells us are needs associated with 'Toxic Trio'. Accordingly we estimate that approximately 50% of Children's Social Care demand can be attributed to the 'Toxic Trio'

Appendix 1: contains some supporting information

4. The help available now

Appendix 2: contains a brief overview of help currently available to children and families impacted by the 'Toxic Trio'

A market engagement event with key stakeholders, those that receive requests for help, and those that directly provide service held in October 2015 identified some challenges and gaps with the way help is currently provided to children and families impacted by the 'Toxic Trio'.

- Existing services work in silos; workers and services need to be better aligned and co-ordinated; there needs to be a 'whole family' approach so services work with perpetrators while victims and their children receive the domestic abuse help they need and services talk to each other, a single referral route for domestic abuse services and Child Safeguarding issues should be considered.
- Support for victims and lower level family support is shared across agencies; the lack of a single referral/ point of access leads to duplication and waste.
- Help needs to be more child centred and focussed on the 'whole family'.
- There needs to be some specialist child support.
- Parental mental health services are needed for 'common health' problems like anxiety and depression that fall below the threshold for commissioned services
- Substance misuse services are voluntary unless a referral is made by the judiciary. Parents cannot be 'mandated' to attend. Parents need to be helped to recognise the problem, how it's affecting their parenting capacity, to be encouraged to 'use not misuse' and then engage.
- There are insufficient perpetrator programmes.
- There are insufficient prevention and awareness programmes that educate victims, perpetrators, children and young people about healthy relationships, impact of DA on children and young people, 'what is domestic abuse and 'Toxic Trio', build confidence and challenge unacceptable behaviours which build resilient families.
- Capacity and capability across the whole workforce needs to improve so that staff can better identify, risk assess and importantly intervene with 'Toxic Trio' issues.
- Sustainability within the third sector.

5. The challenge going forward

The challenge is to reduce the demand associated with the 'Toxic Trio', the corresponding long term damage, the associated cost and to maximise the

benefit of the Council's/ wider partnership's reduce investment through more timely, relevant and effective help to children and families in Walsall that are impacted by domestic abuse, parental mental ill health and parental substance misuse; help that prevents the need for statutory intervention where it is safe to do so , help that stop situations deteriorating where statutory intervention is unavoidable and help that avoids repeat requests.

6. Planned initiatives to strengthen the help available

Whilst there is a good research evidence base that the 'Toxic Trio' is a major demand driver for social care and that providing support improves children's outcomes, there is no evidence base for specific interventions that will reduce the demand for Looked After Children.

The 16/17 draft budget includes an £860,000 'invest to save' proposal aimed at reducing and mitigating the impact of Toxic Trio in Walsall enabling families to exercise choice in their lives, challenging the behaviour of perpetrators and reducing the need for children to become Looked After. It is considered that taking action with the evidence that exists to strengthen the help to children and families impacted by the 'Toxic Trio' is preferable to taking no action.

It is proposed to use this investment to:

- Build voluntary sector and peer support capacity to deliver practical hands on volunteering capacity – a key strand of a sustainable response going forward.
- Up skill our existing workforce to confidently respond to issues of domestic abuse, parental mental ill health and parental substance misuse – front line staff who already have contact with children and families because they receive the request for help or because they assess the family or review the case to help them to better assess risk and to give timely and effective help directly. This resource will be a key part of a sustainable response going forward.
- Strengthen existing arrangements and develop more joined up and integrated approaches across the partnership including the establishment of a single pathway that identifies 'Toxic Trio' issues at the first point of contact, providing timely support and interventions reducing the risk of escalation.
- Develop evidence based perpetrator and prevention programmes.
- Commission specialist services to meet existing gaps.
- Secure specialist domestic abuse, mental health and substance misuse expertise to deliver targeted support to families with children who are in need on or a child protection plan.

7. The intended impact

The proposed strengthening of help available to children and families impacted by domestic abuse, parental mental ill health and parental substance misuse is intended to minimise the risk of harm to children and improving their future learning, behaviour, health and life chances

The proposed investment is intended to achieve savings associated with a reduction in the number of looked after children (5 in 2017/18) and a reduced need for social worker posts, primarily agency social workers (3 posts in 2017/18).

Report Author: Andrea Potts

Assistant Director Early Help, Commissioning and Workforce Development

Tel: 01922 654599

E Mail: pottsandrea@walsall.gov.uk

Appendix 1: supporting data on extent of Toxic Trio

- In 2014/15 there were 5,629 referrals to Children's Social Care
- Of which 3,966 (70%) were due to neglect, behaviour, domestic abuse
- Since 2011 demand linked to domestic abuse has increased from 500 (2011) to 925 (2012) to 1,166 (2013) to 1,358 (2014) and now accounts for approximately 30% of all children social care demand
- There were 1018 requests for Early Help due to domestic abuse, neglect and behaviour in 2014/15, 20% of which (194) had a previous request for Early Help for the same reason.
- Twenty percent of all requests for Early Help are re referred within 12 months
- In 2014/15 - 2734 cases were referred to Domestic Abuse Referral Team (DART), 90% of which related to adult female victims and involved 2 or more children, 3% which related to pregnant women

Appendix 2: a brief overview of help currently available to children and families impacted by the 'Toxic Trio'

Advice and support for victims of domestic abuse

Walsall Domestic Violence Forum (WDVF):

5 Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVA) that provide the following to any high risk victim referred to them or self-referral as needed:

Risk assessment

Referral to, and client representation at, Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) for high risk DV cases.

Safety planning with individual clients

One-to-one support, telephone support, group support/facilitation

One-to-one and group education programmes

Accompanying clients to meetings i.e.: legal, housing, financial/benefits, child protection conference etc.

Direct application to the Home Office re approval for clients with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)

Referral/signposting to partner agencies as required

Collaboration with partner agencies in order to safeguard client and any children

Secure refuge/safe accommodation where required

Court support

Home visits to clients with Police and other partner agencies

Support clients at police station when making statements / retraction

1 Young Persons Independent Domestic Violence Adviser who provides one to one and group support as above in an age appropriate way to young people aged 16 to 25.

Caldmore Accord:

1 specialist court based IDVA to domestic violence and abuse (DVA) victims accessing the criminal and justice system who reside in Walsall aged over 16 (no maximum age) male or female providing up to 6 months support:

Emotional and practical support, record case work accurately.

Risk assessment, needs assessment and safeguarding for clients and their dependents.

Communicate outcome of court proceedings with victims and other agencies.

Advocate on behalf of victims before, during and after court proceedings, taking Victim Personal Statements and forwarding to CPS.

Keep in regular contact with clients from referral/plea date to trial date.

Victim Support:

3 volunteer 'Serious Case Workers' who provide daily support with housing, safety planning, risk assessment, money and housing advice, guidance and support to victims of DA where there is an outstanding case going through the justice system.

These workers are 'IDVA trained' as a requirement of their funding stream however, their funding also prevents them from working as IDVAs. Therefore they refer on to IDVA employed by other organizations.

Walsall Housing Group:

2 IDVAs providing the following services to victims of DV who reside in WHG tenancies:

Risk assessment

Finding refuge accommodation if needed

Compiling special rehousing cases to give priority to rehousing

Safety planning, safeguarding and putting in place security in victim's homes, including CCTV

Support in court and throughout the legal processes

Maintaining regular contact with the client and providing advice and support as needed

Attending CORE Group and Child Protection Conferences

Referral to and support in Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

Advocating with other partner agencies on behalf of the client

Making referrals to agencies such as Children's and Adults social care, WPH mental health service, and internal teams such as Income & Collection, Independent Living Team and Money Mentors

Referrals to National Centre for Domestic Violence /Solicitors after advising clients about Non Molestation Orders, protection and orders and notices through legal systems.

Third Sector and community partners, e.g. Ainna, Walsall Black Sisters.

Provide help to victims of domestic abuse

Accommodation for victims of domestic abuse

- 34 units of emergency accommodation (refuge/safe houses) for victims of DV and their children.

- 12 units of floating support for victims of DV and their families
- Child support worker based with the refuge working with children affected by DV

Support for offenders

- Staffordshire and West Midlands Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) (Probation) Manage offenders in the community – those subject to a court order and those released from prison on licence; providing services for low and medium risk offenders, delivery of statutory supervision and intervention to those convicted of domestic abuse offences. Interventions include both long format programme (Building Better Relationships) and a short format (Structured Intervention for domestic abuse)

Assistance for people recovering from drug and alcohol dependency

- The Beacon deliver integrated substance misuse services that assist people to recover from alcohol and drug dependency. Walsall people can self-refer and access a range of services from harm reduction advice to structured medical interventions. The service has strong links with The Manor Hospital, GP surgeries and Pharmacists across the borough and offers specific support services at every stage of the criminal justice process from arrest, court liaison, probation and post prison treatments to contribute to reducing crime and safer local communities.

The services include family orientated interventions to improve the outcomes for parents and their children

Help for Parental and Child Mental Health

Commissioned services include low level mental health support and counselling such as that provided by WPH skilled and trained mental health workers commissioned by Walsall NHS CCG and Kooth online free emotional and mental health support and, Child and Adult Mental Health Service (CAMHS) providing targeted child and adult mental health and support services delivered by qualified mental health nurses and professionals, and services up to crisis need.

Voluntary organisations Homestart and Safe Families for Children Commissioned by the Council provide a range of one to one support, befriending, peer mentor help to overcome isolation, build confidence and give families 'time out' through overnight stays.