

**MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY TASK & FINISH GROUP:
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

THURSDAY 6th AUGUST 2014 AT 6.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillors; Hinkley (Chair), Foord, Knight, T. Malik and Sharif

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Angela Fraser – Democracy and Scrutiny Officer – LBC
- Michele Marvin – Consultation & Engagement Officer
- John Woodward – Interim Housing Solutions Manager
- Detective Inspector – Richard Tilling – Bedfordshire Police
- Detective Inspector – Aaron Kiff – Bedfordshire Police

		ACTION
1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (REF: 1)	
	Resolved: Apologies for absence from the meeting was received on behalf of Councillor O'Callaghan.	
2.	MINUTES (REF: 2)	
	Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 th June 2014 be agreed as a true record and the chair be authorised to sign them.	
3.	CHAIR'S UPDATE	
	The Chair advised Councillor Gale had resigned due to personal issues.	
4.	EVIDENCE GATHERING (REF: 5.1)	
	<p><u>DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN RELATION TO THE COUNCIL'S HOMELESSNESS SERVICE</u></p> <p>John Woodward, interim Housing Solutions Manager presented the report on domestic violence procedures relating to homelessness and data on the number of domestic abuse cases handled by the homelessness service.</p> <p>He advised legislation and guidance governing how Council's provide homelessness services is set out in the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities 2006, supplemented by guidance issued in 2009, 2011 and 2012 which relates to intentionality, the Localism Act and suitability for accommodation respectively.</p> <p>Relationship breakdown which includes domestic violence is a common cause of homelessness or potential homelessness. Persons experiencing domestic violence can approach the council as well as other agencies for advice to</p>	

explore options for temporary or permanent re-housing.

The procedures below are followed by the homelessness service:

- When a disclosure is made through the customer service centre it is referred to a Housing Solutions Officer;
- The Housing Solutions Officer offers advice and assistance which includes: signposting and or referral to the local agencies (women's aid);
- Most referrals made are to Women's Aid and in the last 2 years the number of referrals made have been between 10-15 per year
- For those wishing to remain in the home advice is given on the 'Homesafe scheme' which provides safety in the home without fear of further harm. The scheme is a joint project run by the Council and the Police to ensure the person is fully supported to remain safe within home. The Scheme provides: replacement locks, door modifications and/or replacement, new window fittings, panic alarms, mobile phone and letterbox security; if necessary a safe room can also be created.
- Temporary accommodation is provided in cases of persons fleeing violence which is managed by the Housing Services teams.
- Once all investigations are completed and a duty is owed temporary/permanent accommodation is offered usually by a housing association or in the private rented sector

Training

All Housing Solutions Officer receive continuous updates on domestic violence which is delivered through the council's safeguarding team and IDVAs (independent domestic violence advisors) on the multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC), and domestic abuse, stalking and honour based violence (DASH). Formal training is provided periodically the last being in 2012.

The following questions/comments were made:

Are people willing to discuss personal matters in an open environment such as the customer service centre?

Domestic violence disclosures made to customer service staff are fast tracked to a Housing Solutions Officer where they are seen in a private interview room.

The figures in the chart do they relate to the total number of decisions made?

The figures at the bottom of each column relate to the total number of disclosures made.

What criteria is used when considering whether to provide accommodation?

The Officer would need to determine whether the person is eligible, homeless, in priority need and has a local connection.

	<p>The homelessness Act 2002 extended the definition of homelessness to include those at risk of violence, whatever the source of the violence which now provides that it is not reasonable for a person to continue to occupy accommodation if it is probable that it will lead to domestic violence or other violence against them or any person who normally resides with them as a member of the family.</p> <p><i>At what point would contact be made with a social worker?</i></p> <p>If children are living in the home social services would be contacted.</p> <p><i>How many people took up the Homesafe Scheme?</i></p> <p>I am not sure of the exact figures to hand but will find out and circulate the information to Members.</p> <p><i>What is the timescale for adaptations under the Homesafe Scheme?</i></p> <p>Will find out and circulate the information to Members.</p> <p><i>Is the Homesafe scheme similar to the Bobby van service?</i></p> <p>The scheme is a joint project funded by the Council and the Police whereas the bobby van service is solely run by the Police.</p> <p>Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.</p> <p>(ii) That the interim Housing Solutions Manager circulate the following information to Task and Finish Group Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of people helped through the Homesafe Scheme • Timescale for adaptations through the Homesafe Scheme 	
5.2	<p><u>BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE</u></p> <p>Detective Inspectors Aaron Kiff and Richard Tilling from Bedfordshire Police gave a powerpoint presentation on the Police response to Domestic Violence which addressed the following areas:</p> <p><i>Is domestic violence a priority for Bedfordshire Police?</i></p> <p>Yes, the Police priorities form part of the strategic performance objectives mentioned in the Police & Crime Plan. The Police work with partners to encourage the reporting of domestic abuse and to reduce repeat victimisation. Domestic abuse current figures show an increase between April – June 2013 with crimes up by 45.5% which is being addressed in the Chief Constables Annual Delivery Plan for 2014-15 and the following targets set:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To reduce levels of repeat offending for domestic abuse</i> • <i>To increase levels of under-reported crimes (serious sexual offences and domestic abuse)</i> • <i>To improve service to vulnerable children and adults and repeat victims</i> <p><i>How do Bedfordshire Police encourage reporting?</i></p> <p>Following criticism of the Forces victim care outlined in the HMIC report</p>	

released in March this year an action plan was developed. Bedfordshire Police works in partnership with various agencies to build relationships and trust with victims and play an integral part in the MARAC process. The force now focuses its priority around providing a victim centred approach. In terms of prevention measures in place to address the concerns raised in the HMIC Report, a public protection steering group has been set up; and a national action plan in place which has 125 different actions. Bedfordshire Police have identified where they will be as a Force and developed an action plan which targets 6 key areas the outcome of which will reported back to Home Office at the end of September. Both actions plans which will run alongside each other.

How many Officer do Bedfordshire Police have assigned to domestic violence unit? In total there are 15 posts. But there is currently 2 vacancies which provision are being made to fill.

Training

All frontline Police officers receive training through the Streetwise Max programme. Training includes scenarios which are focused on domestic violence to enhance officer's skills and understanding of the issue. DV training is not extended to PCSOs but it is rolled out to all the call centre staff.

Bedfordshire Police is in the process of reviewing their domestic abuse standard operating procedures and will move forward with the Independent Domestic Abuse support worker roles to be funded by the Police & Crime Commissioner. The three posts are currently on hold and will link into victim support to help support with non-high risk victims.

Partnerships

- Work is continuing around the newly formed domestic abuse voluntary perpetrator programme which is to be implemented in the autumn this year and aimed at high risk perpetrators that avoid court proceedings.
- The Force is working with partners to set up a Children's multi agency safeguarding hub (MASH) to be run in a similar way to the Bedford MASH. The MASH will be a single point of contact for all safeguarding concerns regarding children and young people. It brings together professionals from services that have contact with children, young people and families making the best possible use of their knowledge to keep children safe from harm. It researches all information held on professional databases; it identifies low-level repeat referrals which taken in isolation may not appear concerning and makes referrals to other agencies
- The Initiation of a countywide domestic abuse workshop is also underway

MARAC

- Beds Police fully supports the MARAC process which is co-chair by the Sergeant.
- High risk domestic abuse cases are referred to MARAC via MODUS the system which is a national system for agencies to input information

which can be shared.

- Beds Police play an integral part in the MARAC process and take action when required
- Children social care represented at MARAC
- MARAC meetings are held every two weeks

MARAC cases over the past 12 months

	Cases discussed	No. of repeat cases	No. of children
2&23/07/2013	40	0	69
13/08/2013	24	2	56
3&24/09/2013	29	5	41
15/10/2013	22	6	39
5&26/11/2013	43	7	67
17/12/2013	17	1	38
14/01/2013	19	4	46
4&25/02/2014	48	15	74
18/03/2014	30	4	42
8&29/04/2014	58	5	77
20/05/2014	29	1	41
10&24/06/2014	55	11	64

Relay Scheme

The scheme raises awareness of domestic abuse in the home and is soon to be trialled in Luton schools. It was initially trialled in central Bedfordshire council in limited schools and now covers all schools in central beds. The scheme is to make schools aware when pupils might be affected by domestic violence and information is sent to the Relay team by Policy by 8.30am each day. In terms of resources there will be 3 domestic abuse referral assistants who will be located in victim support as they will be managed by the IDVAs. The aim is to support children where domestic abuse has occurred in the homes, which do not meet the threshold for children services. In Central Beds the early year's team has this responsibility.

Luton DV incidents

Arrest rate	72%
Detection rate	30%
Repeat incident location	33%
Child present in household	38%

- The arrest rate figure include breach of peace and positive action taken

	<p>by the police.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luton's domestic abuse figures a similar to Bedford and Central Beds • The introduction of body cameras are proving successful for recording evidence • Police will take positive action to arrest a perpetrator even if the victim does not want the arrest <p>The chair enquired whether positive action would be taken if a neighbour reported an incident.</p> <p>In response the Police replied that an officer would attend the incident and positive action would be taken.</p> <p><u>Performance update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The police record incidents year to date (April and May 2014 - 1755) which is 22% higher than last years figures (April and May 2013 – 1442) • The amount of named outstanding domestic abuse suspects not yet arrested or on the police national computer as wanted has reduced by 25% • During May 2014, 99.5% of all domestic abuse incidents were marked as having DASH risk assessments • The actual number of domestic abuse arrests made continues to increase from 351 YTD 2013/14 to 479 year to date 2014/15 which is due to the release of the HMIC Report. <p>Councillor Sharif enquired about the voluntary perpetrator programme and whether it was similar to the sex trade programme which didn't work and how it would work.</p> <p>In response the Police advised they would find out and report back.</p> <p>Councillor Foord requested clarification on arrest and detection rates.</p> <p>In response the Police replied the arrest rate relates to a crime which would lead to an arrest and the detection rate is the verbal argument but not a crime.</p> <p>Resolved: That the Police be thanked for their presentation.</p>	
	<p><u>Consultation</u></p> <p>Michele Marvin, consultation and engagement officer gave an oral update and advised that questionnaires for the young people's and agency consultation had been completed. An email to all agencies concerned including a link to the questionnaire would be sent out on Thursday (7th August) with a deadline for responses by the end of August. The young people's questionnaire had been sent out to youth workers and youth offending service for comments in preparation for the ethnical panel. The service user consultation also needs ethical approval which cannot be obtained until the end of August. It is envisaged that the young people and service user consultation would start mid September once ethical approval was obtained.</p>	

	Resolved: That the oral update be noted.	
	<p><u>Work Programme</u></p> <p>That Nikki Middleton to be invited to the 25th September 2014 next meeting.</p> <p>The Democracy and Scrutiny Officer advised members that a meeting would be arranged to receive evidence from the schools. This would take place on 15th September at 4pm at the Riverbank Primary School (Bath Road).</p> <p>Resolved: that the oral update be noted.</p>	
	(The meeting ended at 7.30pm)	