

**CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL**

A meeting of the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel was held on 23 April 2018.

**PRESENT:** Councillors D J Branson, J Goodchild, A Hellaoui, L Lewis and V Walkington

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** J Cain (Local Democracy reporter- Gazette)

**OFFICERS:** S Blood, C Moore, M Walker

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** Councillor R Arundale, Councillor D Davison, Councillor Z Uddin.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

None declared

**17/31 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 MARCH 2018**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2018 were accepted as a true record.

**17/32 PREVENTING DOMESTIC ABUSE IN MIDDLESBROUGH**

Claire Moore, Domestic Abuse Operational Coordinator and Marion Walker, Head of Stronger Communities provided the Panel with a presentation to update the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel on the progress Middlesbrough Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership (DASP) in relation to the 2016 Preventing Domestic Abuse Strategy. The presentation also provided members with the findings of the domestic abuse needs assessment which was completed in September 2017 on behalf of the Partnership to determine the high level priorities and inform decisions about future commissioning of domestic abuse services.

The officer outlined that Domestic abuse is still prevalent and that we need to ensure it is 'Everybody's business'. The panel heard that, 10% of all calls to the police relate to domestic abuse; 2 women die in the hands of their partner/ ex partner; 50% of known domestic abuse cases, children were directly abused and on average a victim will experience 35 incidents before making a disclosure to an agency or requesting help.

The panel were advised that in 2016, the Government set out a very ambitious strategy- Violence against Women and girls strategy 2016-2020. Middlesbrough ensured that their strategy incorporated all of the points - with the key message of that it is 'Everybody's business'. The officer outlined that within the Strategy, early intervention and intervention were seen as a priority to stop violence and abuse escalating to a critical condition. In terms of public spending, it was viewed better to solve issues early, so that victims could get the right services at the right time.

The Strategy also discussed transformation of service provision, looking at how services can be delivered in a different way.

In terms of Middlesbrough's Preventing Domestic Abuse Strategy, there were four key principles:

1. Prevent offending
2. Prevent reoffending
3. Support Victims
4. Monitor and Challenge

The officer circulated a report to members which set out the principles and the key progress to date.

The priorities for 2016 were as follows:

- Prevent violence and abuse from happening in first place.
- Analysis and strategic needs assessment to understand local picture.
- Increase awareness and change attitudes
- Improve outcomes for victims, perpetrators and children/ young people

The progress in the last two years had been as follows:

- Dedicated operational lead (C . Moore) to work with all agencies to embed the strategy and work towards making a difference.
- Prevention in schools- Middlesbrough has commissioned Harbour Support Service to deliver the Domestic Abuse Children and Young Person Service. All primary and secondary schools are offered age appropriate prevention programmes and during 2015/2016 school engagement improved significantly with prevention work delivered in 39 out of 42 schools identified.
- Prevention in BME communities- it was explained that BME community is a high risk group, yet reporting is relatively low. HALO has commissioned BME specialist service which has developed a preventative approach. From this, Middlesbrough has seen an increase from the BME community accessing the specialist provision.
- White ribbon- the Panel were advised that in 2017, Middlesbrough were successful in securing the white ribbon award which is in place for 3 years. They work across a wide range of partners and ensure certain elements are embedded, for example, implementing a work place policy and training preventing domestic abuse champions. They has also been awareness raising, including leaflets and ensuring the Middlesbrough Council website is up to date with key signposts and information.
- There has been significant work in improving Early Identification and ensuring Middlesbrough comply to minimum standards.
- A Work Place Policy had been introduced and the workforce have been trained level 3 standard. They are trained to identify domestic abuse and work with victims and children and this work has been embedded.
- Performance Monitoring contracts - this was introduced to ensure there was better use of data and working to continually improving the provision.
- Information / raising awareness (Campaigns Leaflets Website)
- Navigator Project- in 2017, 6 local authorities (Middlesbrough, Stockton, Darlington, Durham and Hartlepool) were successful in securing the Navigator bid, which was £720,000 DCLG funding for specialist accommodation based support and service reform to meet the priorities for Domestic Abuse Service DCLG bid. The bid proposed to meet an identified gap in service provision relating to women from BME networks and victims with complex needs. The panel learnt that some victims suffered from Toxic trio (mental health and drugs and alcohol misuse). It was difficult to work with entrenched behaviour and sometimes they cannot access refuge provision. From the bid, the first specialist BME refuge offering 16 units was established. The refuge was full within the first week of opening.
- Training / Professional Development - vast amount of work being done within this area.

A member raised the issue of Universal credit and the concern for victims if they cannot access money. The Officer explained Domestic abuse services were alert to this and the impact universal credit might have. Universal Credit is a single claimant and therefore unless DWP notified someone is a victim or at risk they would not make alternative payment arrangements. Domestic abuse Services will do all they can to support a victim in situation where a claim might not be processed for six weeks. The panel were made aware that through Navigator Project which was for women with complex need or BME victims, there was a personalisation fund which could be used for each victim. This fund is used if there were a short fall. The refuge would also cover some of the shortfall, for example, when a victim leaves refuge, there may be a delay in accessing money and the personalisation fund would assist in this instance.

A member also raised alarm that the refuge was full. M Walker advised that there was a lot of work being done to prevent victims going into refuge, as this was the last resort and often for high risk cases. The panel were made aware that the council funds a Sanctuary Scheme which helps a victim feel safe in their own property with a target hardening approach. National evidence based strategies are now focused much more on trying to ensure victims and children are able to stay in their homes without upheaval of fleeing whilst ensuring much more is done to pursue and deter the perpetrators. However nationally there is an issue of refuge space not meeting demand.

C Moore provided a breakdown of the rate per 1000 population of the number of domestic abuse incidents in each of the four local areas in Cleveland (Domestic abuse statistics).

It was outlined that the data used, covered the period between April 2016 and March 2017 was extracted from police systems outside of the regulatory statutory data returns, published nationally and locally. Therefore data in the report may differ from that reported elsewhere regarding crime activity in Cleveland.

The rate of domestic abuse had remained static for about 5 years, but it was clear that in terms of domestic abuse Middlesbrough was higher than the other local authorities. Between April 2016- March 2017, there were 4921 recorded domestic abuse incidents in Middlesbrough. 2204 were converted to a domestic abuse criminal offence which equates to 44.8% of all incidents and 78.7% of all police recorded domestic abuse crimes with an identifiable victim involved a female victim.

It was noted that:

- The majority (63.2%) of domestic abuse crimes, with an identifiable victim, were committed by a current or former partner.
- High proportion of records with 'Not Identified' in the relationship status (14.2%)
- 33% of all domestic abuse crimes involved a former partner.
- Separation increases the risk of further violence in domestic abuse cases in the short to medium-term.
- 7.4% of all domestic abuse crimes, the victim was identified as a parent of the perpetrator.
- In 2016/2017 (OP Data) 8.3% of all domestic abuse incidents recorded children were witness or present. On average there was 1.67 children experiencing incidents, per incident where there was a child involved
- 30% of total DA incidents involving children were due to child contact and conflict over access.
- 21.9% of victims (356 people) reported experiencing 2 or more DA crimes.
- In some cases up to 15/ 17 offences recorded.
- Alcohol was identified in 16.9% of all DA incidents reported to police
- 232 cases were referred to MARAC in Middlesbrough 27.6 % of those were repeat cases. MARAC referrals are more prevalent in Middlesbrough, making up 35% of total referrals across all four local authority areas.
- 25.5% of perpetrators committed 2 or more crimes in the period.
- With some perpetrators committing up to 12 offences during 2016/17
- Of the 392 repeat perpetrators, 67 (17.1%) were female.

A member questioned- What do we mean by Domestic abuse? To which the officer outlined domestic abuse can be a whole spectrum of abuse such as physical, sexual, emotional and psychological.

It was also evident that recorded domestic abuse crimes were highest in some of the deprived areas such as North Ormesby which had the highest rate of domestic abuse crimes per 1000 population of any ward in Middlesbrough (45.39 per 1000 pop, 135 Crimes). Central and Newport were also identified as areas with higher prevalence. When looking at actual number of crimes in 2016/17; Newport was highest with 328 crimes, Central second with 308 crimes,

Berwick Hills and Pallister were third with 233 crimes.

C Moore outlined that they are aware that 69.6% of domestic abuse crimes were committed between 3:00pm and 3:59am. Domestic abuse crimes peaked on Saturday and into the early hours of Sunday morning (38.6% of domestic abuse crimes on Saturday or Sunday) and 15.4% of domestic abuse crimes were committed between 2:00pm on Saturday and 3:59 Sunday morning.

The panel asked whether there were any root causes which increased risk of domestic abuse, to which the officer responded it was difficult to say as there was no single cause or factor that can lead to domestic abuse but officers know that some victims can be more vulnerable to becoming victims of domestic abuse and less capable of existing abusive relationships. Officers were aware that alcohol misuse certainly seems to be identified in a lot of cases (victim or perpetrator), mental health issues (victim or perpetrator) and we see a lot of cases concerning child contact arrangements. Situational factors, although not direct causes may increase risk of domestic abuse such as financial problems and unemployment.

In 2016-17 Middlesbrough Council spent £455,834,00 on domestic abuse services, this was spent on the following:

- DA Link Worker
  - DA Counselling
  - Refuge / Outreach
  - Perpetrator Programme
  - Specialist BME service
  - Children and YP service
  - IDVA
  - Sanctuary Scheme

The strengths of the services are as follows:

- Range of Services unique ability to work with victims, perpetrators and children affected by DA
- Excellent standards
- Embedded in local communities
- Front line knowledge experience
- Strong profile – delivering nationally recognised models of work
- Additional external resource through national funding
- Increasing numbers accessing provision
- Range of processes supporting partnership working
- Strategic and operational commitment to partnership working (Operation encompass/MARARC)

C Moore, outlined that through the needs assessment, they identified areas of improvement, these were as follows:

- Communication and information sharing, across multi agency partnership on both a strategic and operational level- need to ensure it is 'Everybody's business' and intervention is placed at the right time.
- Performance Monitoring and Data Collection - A number of providers deliver range of contracts, which is fragmented which has an impact on the effectiveness of response. The Council wish to ensure we collect data effectively and in a timely manner.
- Risk Assessment and Safety Planning - ensure these are effective
- Referral Pathways and Thresholds
- Commissioning - The disjointed nature of multiple agencies involved with supporting individuals with domestic abuse leads to gaps through which people can fall and

duplication of response in the initial stages of a disclosure of domestic abuse. The service will review commissioning next year. Not a single service which provides a single point of access.

- Victims voice - look at developing focus groups, looking at how we develop provision in the future.
- Perpetrators (Nationally 1% access provision)- working with the perpetrator programme, and looking at how we can help families remain in their own home.
- Refuge Provision not meeting demand- there were 178 referrals in 2015/16, 103 were not able to access provision, however the Council have good networking and we ensured victims were kept safe and directed to the correct service.
- Reducing Children Looked After - Council aware that 222,000 safeguarding cases, domestic abuse was prevalent.
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults
- Communication/ Awareness Raising - communications/ individual communications plan.

Needs of victims were also discussed C Moore outlined that the below needs were placed in order of priority were identified by both specialist providers and victims during consultation:

#### **Victim/ Survivor**

- Emotional Psychological Well Being
- Children (Safety and Contact
- Victim Safety
- Housing / Financial Support

#### **Children**

- Safety
- Emotional support,
- Improved relationships with parents
- Prevention / awareness.

#### **Perpetrators**

- Emotional psychological well-being
- Coping mechanisms,
- Help to change behaviour,
- Mental health issues,
- Suicide ideation / attempted suicide,
- Alcohol related arguments
- Improved relationships with partner and children .

Finally, C Moore advised the panel of the recommendations from the Needs assessment, these were as follows:

- Revise strategy & develop action plan (Key Priorities)
- Review Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership
- Develop Whole System Approach
- Trauma informed practice
- Single Point of Access
- Establish pathways and mechanisms for sustained communication between agencies
- Develop multi-agency screening for children and vulnerable adults living with DA
- Improve Multi Agency oversight over hard to reach cases' using statutory safeguarding thresholds.

- Promote and Raise Awareness there is already extensive work being undertaken within hard to reach groups including for example, information sessions within mosques/ work with LGBT groups.
- All services should receive information and guidance re safety planning and risk assessment and this should be applied consistently across partnership

The members queried where they should direct members of the public if a case of domestic abuse was reported.

In response, the officer outlined that at present, there is two paths. If a child is involved, it should be directed to Front door of children services, and if an individual case, this should be directed to Harbour or My Sisters place, however they hope that a single point of contact would make referrals easier.

C Moore outlined that the Council were in the process of printing leaflets with essential numbers and it was outlined that this would be circulated to the members once available.

The Chair thanked C Moore for her presentation.

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### **SELECTIVE LICENSING IN MIDDLESBROUGH- UPDATE ON FINAL REPORT**

The scrutiny panel had received the draft final report for approval in respect of its investigation of Selective Landlord Licensing. The Chair had requested that the panel circulate any comments to the Democratic Services Officer.

During the meeting, the scrutiny panel also considered the draft conclusions and recommendations for submission to the Executive.

AGREED as follows:

That the following conclusions be included in the scrutiny panel's final report:

1. Based on the evidence received, the Panel applauds the excellent work being undertaken by the Selective Licensing Team and multi-agency teams in North Ormesby. The Panel would also like a special mention to be given to the community of North Ormesby who work tirelessly to ensure that their community remains a vibrant and safe place to live, and who contribute to the Mayor's vision of creating a safer and stronger Middlesbrough.
2. The Selective Licensing model adopted in North Ormesby has proved to be extremely successful, adopting a multi-agency approach and putting the community at the heart of the scheme.
3. The Panel are passionate and extremely complimentary of the Selective Licensing model in North Ormesby. The Panel recommends that the next roll-out of the scheme mirrors this model to ensure its success.
4. That the Panel be updated on a six monthly basis on the scheme, and informed once a decision is made on the next area for Selective Licensing.
5. From evidence received, it is clear that at the beginning of the scheme, there were some misunderstandings and false conceptions by landlords, tenants and the local community regarding timescales.
6. The community, and landlords, view the model of Selective Licensing in North Ormesby as unique and have grave concerns that once the scheme comes to an end, the area will go back into decline. The team must continue the excellent work they do with particular emphasis on communication to ensure the Exit Strategy is fully understood by all parties.
7. From discussions with neighbouring authorities, the Panel saw merit in potentially having a standard set of license conditions (wording exactly the same) across the North East Authorities.
8. Middlesbrough's privately rented sector is growing and any initiative for landlords to

improve standards across the private rented sector is positive. At present there is no such scheme across Middlesbrough, other than Selective Licensing in North Ormesby.

That the following recommendations be included in the scrutiny panel's final report:

1. The Panel are passionate and extremely complimentary of the Selective Licensing model in North Ormesby. The Panel recommends that the next roll-out of the scheme mirrors this model to ensure its success.
2. That the Panel be updated on a six monthly basis on the scheme, and informed once a decision is made on the next area for Selective Licensing.
3. That a 'step by step' guide on Selective Licensing be developed in conjunction with the Ward Councillor(s), tenants, landlords and community of North Ormesby . This should include practical information, timescales of Selective Licensing and benefits of the scheme. Once produced, this should be shared with new licensees/ tenants, the BIG Local, North Ormesby Community Council and included on Middlesbrough Council's website and displayed within North Ormesby Community Hub.
4. That the Panel receives a full evaluation of the scheme towards the end of 2020. Dependant on the outcome and need, the Panel recommends that the Council reapplies for North Ormesby to be designated for a second time. The Panel is aware that is it difficult to comment at this stage until a full evaluation has been completed. If North Ormesby does not fit the criteria set out by the Housing Act 2004 for redesignation, the Panel would like to be consulted regarding the exit strategy and future plans for North Ormesby.
5. That a standard set of license conditions be developed by the Selective License Forum and adopted and utilised in the second roll out (proviso to include additional conditions to fit the demand and problems within a specific area.)
6. That a voluntary accreditation scheme be developed for Middlesbrough Landlords. This would be rolled-out town-wide.
7. That the services offered by the Public Protection Team in relation to Regulation of Housing Standards and Enforcement be publicised in the Love Middlesbrough Magazine.
8. That during the second roll-out of Selective Licensing, funding be allocated from existing resources to employ additional staff (as required) to carry out inspections.
9. That the Panel be updated in six months' time in relation to community safety.

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## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD UPDATE**

The Chair presented an update on the matters that were considered at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 10 April 2018. The Chair provided the Scrutiny Panel with information in respect of the following items:

- Budget and Balanced Scorecards - Position at Q3 2017/18
- Aster Care Report
- Final Report - Environment Scrutiny Panel - Fly Tipping and Enforcement
- Executive Forward Plan
- Scrutiny Panel Progress Reports

AGREED as follows:

- That the update be noted