

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Education and Children's Services      **DATE:** 24.01.12

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**WARD(S):** *All*

**COMMISSIONER:** Cllr Natasha Pantelic, Education and Children's Services

### **PART I**

#### **FOR COMMENT & CONSIDERATION**

#### **THE IMPACT OF DOMESTIC ABUSE ON CHILDREN**

##### **1. Purpose of Report**

To provide the Overview and Scrutiny Panel with information regarding the incidence of domestic abuse in the town and its impact on children. The report contains comparative data with other local authorities; it outlines the support services currently available and makes recommendations to help further improve service provision.

##### **2. Recommendations**

The Committee is requested to;

- a. note the content of the report which highlights the comparatively high level of domestic abuse in the town.
- b. consider the impact and implications for children and vulnerable adults
- c. support the re-commissioning of a new coordinated approach to service provision.

##### **3. Community Strategy Priorities**

- **Being Safe, Feeling Safe**

#### 4. **Other Implications**

##### **(a) Financial**

The planned 'One Council approach to re-commissioning of domestic abuse services will lead to the pooling of resources and some financial savings.

##### **(b) Risk Management**

<b><i>Recommendation</i></b>	<b><i>Risk/Threat/Opportunity</i></b>	<b><i>Mitigation(s)</i></b>
Re-commissioning of a single, comprehensive domestic abuse service to deliver against SBC priorities	Opportunity: Services that are more appropriate to the needs of Slough Risk: Disruption of services during transition	Multi-agency working group set up to ensure proposals are delivered in the most practical way

##### **(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications**

Under Section 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998, it is unlawful for the Council to act in a way which is incompatible with human rights or it could result in the Council being subject to judicial review. The actions outlined in this report are designed to comply with the Human Rights considerations of children and vulnerable adults specifically Article 3 (duty to protect individuals who are at a real and immediate risk of ill treatment) and Article 8 Human Rights Act 1998 (the right to respect for private and family life).

There are no legal implications immediately arising from the report. However, in considering the re-commissioning of services the Council should have regard to their duties under Equalities Act 2010.

##### **(d) Equalities Impact Assessment**

Any re-commissioning of services would include an Equalities Impact Assessment.

#### 5. **Supporting Information**

##### 5.1 **Background Information – National Research into the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people**

Children and young people exposed or experiencing domestic abuse can also be at risk of neglect, sexual and physical abuse. Witnessing domestic abuse can have profound long term effects on their self esteem and mental health and may be a cause of behavioural problems and criminality. This is damaging for the child and costly for local services. This overview is supported by the following national statistics:

##### **The number of children affected by domestic abuse**

- At least 750,000 children a year witness domestic violence (Department of Health, 2002).
- A study by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC, 2008) estimated that one child in twenty witnesses frequent physical violence between parents.

- 1 in 5 girls under sixteen years have been physically hurt by someone they were dating (*online survey by Bliss magazine/Women's Aid, 2008*)

### **The affect of domestic abuse on children**

- School attendance and academic achievement can be affected by domestic abuse.
- Domestic abuse is a central issue in child protection: it is a factor in the family backgrounds of two-thirds of the serious case reviews (SCRs) where a child has died (Hester et al 2006 and Brandon et al 2010).
- 28% of those in prison have witnessed domestic abuse (Jacobson et al., Prison Reform Trust, Punishing Disadvantage 2010). Humphreys, C and Houghton, C (2008) found that babies experiencing domestic abuse are more likely to suffer from ill health, display insecure attachments, have poor sleeping habits and show a high tendency to screaming fits.
- Exposure to high levels of violence during between the ages of 0-4 can alter a child's neurobiological development. (Howarth, Simpson, Barren & Robinson, Safety in Numbers, 2009)
- One child in four who has witnessed domestic violence will experience serious social and behavioural problems" (NSPCC, 2008).
- The Royal College of Psychiatrists describes the long-term impact of domestic abuse on children as follows (2004):
  - They may become anxious or depressed or have a lowered sense of self-worth
  - They may have difficulty sleeping and have nightmares or flashbacks
  - They may complain of physical symptoms such as tummy aches
  - They may start to wet their bed
  - They may have temper tantrums
  - They may behave as though they are much younger than they are
  - They may have problems with school
  - They may become aggressive or internalise their distress and withdraw from others
  - Older children may begin to play truant or start to use alcohol or drugs  
They may begin to self-harm by taking overdoses
  - They may have an eating disorder

## **5.2 Overview of domestic abuse in Slough**

There were almost 3,500 incidents being reported in 2010/11. During this period it was found that approximately 40% of victims had suffered domestic abuse previously and many had witnessed domestic abuse as a child.

Slough has significantly higher levels of reported domestic abuse when compared to other local authorities in the Thames Valley. The only other local authority in Thames Valley with levels of domestic abuse that are comparable to Slough's is Reading. In 2010/11 Thames Valley Police recorded 3023 incidents of domestic abuse in the Reading area, equating to approx. 8 reports every day. In Reading, there was one domestic related murder in June 2010. During the same period Slough had 3451 incidents and no domestic murders.

The majority of incidents involve parents and or carers and 50% of incidents take place in families with a young child (0-5 years). Many victims of domestic abuse are pregnant. Drugs and alcohol are often associated factors.

Domestic abuse affects individuals and families and puts significant demands on the resources of both Thames Valley Police and the local authority as illustrated below:

- Thames Valley Police recorded 3451 incidents of domestic abuse in the Slough area, equating to approximately 9 reports every day (April 2010- March 2011).
- 42% of victims were repeat victims – they had been a victim of domestic abuse in the previous 12 months.
- 80% of residents at Berkshire East and South Bucks Women’s Aid refuge say they witnessed domestic abuse as children (August 2011).
- Analysis of the domestic abuse contacts received by Education and Children’s Services Early Response Hub shows that:
  - The number of domestic abuse related contacts to the Hub average 2 a day.
  - 65.8% of Domestic Abuse contacts were received from the Police.
  - 50% of all Domestic Abuse related contacts were for families with at least one child aged 0-5 year olds.
  - 89% of the Domestic Abuse contacts were related to issues between parents/carers.
  - An analysis in June 2011 of the 95 families, including 166 children aged between 0-17 years involved with Child Protection procedures showed that 38 families had substance misusing parents with the added issue of domestic abuse and that domestic abuse was an issue for 13 families. Three further children were currently dealing with issues stemming from domestic abuse that had happened in their family in the past.
  - An analysis in August 2011 of the 182 children and young people who were
  - Looked After Children in Slough showed that 28 (15%) were from families with a known victim of domestic abuse.

### **5.3 Slough’s domestic abuse strategy**

Reducing the incidence of domestic abuse remains one of the key priorities of the Safer Slough Partnership and the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The local authority has a Domestic Abuse Action Plan which contains activities designed to raise awareness with local GPs, schools and local businesses. It also includes support for children who have witnessed domestic abuse, adult victims and the provision of perpetrator programmes.

A Domestic Abuse Network of partner agencies meets quarterly and delivers against tasks outlined in the DA Action Plan, the Safer Slough Partnership Strategic Action Plan, the Alcohol Harm Reduction Plan and the Local Safeguarding Children Board Business Plan.

### **5.4 The response by children social care to children affected by domestic abuse.**

#### **Referral Pathway**

All agencies working in Slough are bound by the Local Safeguarding Board’s Child Protection Procedures which states that any agency assessment must consider the possibility of domestic abuse and ensure organisational responses safeguard both the child and the non-abusing parent.

Practitioners must share information with Children's Social Care if:

- There has been one serious or several lesser incidents of domestic abuse with a child in the household regardless of whether or not the child(ren) is present at the time. (see also Working Together to Safeguard children, 2010)
- An alleged victim is a child her/himself
- A parent is fleeing domestic abuse, leaving a child(ren) with the allegedly violent partner
- The alleged victim is pregnant
- There is a baby in the household
- There have been any previous serious incidents
- There is a history of aggressive abuse or 'stalking' by the perpetrator
- There are/ have been allegations of sexual assault
- The children have witnessed or been distressed through hearing incident(s) of domestic abuse

Referrals can be made by email, telephone or in writing and are processed initially by experienced Customer Services Officers in Children's Social Care. Referrals are assessed to determine whether they meet the threshold for intervention from Children's Social Care or whether concerns would more appropriately be responded to via the Early Response Hub.

### **Early Response Hub**

The multi-agency team in the hub may respond in a number of ways:

- Supporting the referrer in completing an assessment (using the Common Assessment Framework) and in calling a Team Around the Child/ Family to ensure that services are coordinated.
- Identifying and signposting for appropriate community services, including the services provided at the Children's Centres.

### **Assessment and Planning**

Should there be concern that the children are at risk of significant harm, the Children's Social Care Duty Team will conduct an assessment and proceed with appropriate planning. This may be via a Child in Need meeting or via the Child Protection Process.

Child in Need and Child Protection Plans are child focused but draw on resources to improve parents' and carers' capacity to care for their child(ren) and to protect them from harm.

Team Around the Child, Child in Need and Child Protection meetings aim to be multi-agency in nature to ensure that assessments and plans take into account multi-professional expertise and knowledge.

It is noted that the Ofsted Announced Inspection in April 2011 raised concerns about aspects of practice relating to the assessment of children and young people who were experiencing domestic abuse in their families. As a result of this, Children's Social Care has responded in the following ways:

- A new Risk Assessment Framework has been issued which has been shared with multi-agency partners. All referrals into Children's Social Care are now risk assessed according to this framework.
- Management reviews were undertaken of all cases for children aged 0 – 5 with Child Protection Plans where domestic abuse was a factor.

- All child protection plans are now outcome focused plans and aim to mitigate risks including risks from domestic abuse
- A new training and development plan is being developed to increase knowledge and skills for front line practitioners, managers and Reviewing Officers.

## **5.5 Other Domestic Abuse Services in Slough**

### **Children's Centres**

A significant number of services have been provided through Slough's Children's Centres, in recognition of the comparatively high exposure to domestic abuse amongst the 0 to 5 age group. As well as a range of support groups, workshops for victims, legal advice services and training for the workforce, the Children's Centres provide a safe, confidential haven for organisations working with victims of domestic abuse to meet with their clients and for potential new clients to make discreet contact with the agencies that can provide help. A range of sensitive leaflets and business cards have been produced to enable information to be passed to clients attending the Centres in a subtle way.

### **Berkshire East and South Bucks Women's Aid**

BESBWA provide the following services:

#### **Refuge**

In 2009/10, 62 clients were supported through the Berkshire East & South Bucks refuge (of which 22 were supported through resettlement). However, only 3 (5%) were from the Slough area originally. Whilst only 3 of the 62 refuge clients in 2010 came from Slough, 128 Slough residents and their 176 children were given safe refuge out-of-area, which actually shows that more Slough residents are being moved out-of-area than out-of-area clients are coming in. It should also be noted that of the 62 clients, 16 (24%) moved into the local area.

#### **IDVA Service**

Between April 2010 and March 2011, 245 Slough clients (227 female and 18 male) were referred into Berkshire East & South Bucks Women's Aid's IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor) service (working with high risk clients). 235 children were indirectly supported.

#### **Outreach Service**

Between April 2010 and March 2011, 128 Slough clients (126 females and 2 males) were referred into Berkshire East & South Bucks Women's Aid Outreach service. 149 children were indirectly supported. This service includes individual consultations with clients at the Children's Centres, arranged on an ad hoc basis to suit the clients' needs. Typical attendance is 20 clients per quarter, each of whom has at least one child under 5.

### **BESBWA Children and Young People's Service**

Support for children and young people includes: support groups, play work, art therapy and creative workshops, one to one work with children and young people, fun activities, working in the community, outreach in schools and colleges. More detail on these services is given below:

- One ante-natal and one post-natal group per week on 2 separate Children's Centres, providing support for women during and after pregnancy, when they and their babies are most vulnerable. The objective of the service is to help mothers to develop protective strategies for themselves and their babies and

to recognise the risk to their children. This helps clients to find the confidence and the support to 'break the cycle',

- Two Rainbow parent and toddler groups, run at 2 separate Children's Centres, targeted at families who have experienced abusive relationships and have at least one child under 5. The groups enable the children to experience safe play, promotes healthy attachment between the children and their mothers and helps the mothers to understand the affects of domestic abuse on the children.
- An After School group for 5 to 11 year olds at the Wexham Road Children's Centre, which has supported an average 12 children per term,

### **Domestic Awareness Training for Children's Centre Multi-agency Partners**

6 workshops have been run in the period from July to December 2011, with a minimum of 50 attendees per quarter from a wide range of agencies working front line with parents and children. A further 3 workshops are planned for January to March 2011. The objective of the workshops is to ensure that practitioners, in whatever context they work with families and / or children, are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of domestic abuse and know how to inform clients about the services available and how to refer clients directly where appropriate.

### **Kinara Asian Women's Service**

Kinara provide the following services:

#### **Refuge**

Kinara provide refuge accommodation to Asian women (over the age of 18) and their children who are victims of abuse, whether sexual, emotional or physical. Kinara provide refuge, a link worker in order to empower women to build confidence and self awareness and take-up help and support.

During 09/10, Kinara supported 24 clients through refuge – all but one client was originally from out of area. Of the 24 clients, 8 (33%) moved out of the area (returned to family home or secured private tenancy), 5 (21%) moved into private accommodation in Slough, 4 (17%) moved into Slough owned housing stock, a further 4 (17%) were waiting to be re-housed in Slough, 3 (13%) were not ready to be moved out of supported accommodation.

#### **Outreach**

Kinara provide a drop-in and outreach service with staff speaking Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu.

### **Kinara Children and Young People's Service**

Children are supported with one on one play counselling by Mothers 4 Mothers, who support children who have witnessed or experienced domestic abuse. Kinara provide art workshops to help children come to terms with their experiences

The refuge provides Homework Club for children and healthy eating classes. Other recreational activities include swimming, baking days, cinema trips and mother and child family workshops.

### **Services run by BESBWA and Kinara**

#### **Freedom Programme and Sanctuary Scheme**

The Freedom Programme is a 12 week rolling programme for women to learn more about the reality of domestic abuse including understanding the beliefs held by

abusive men and gaining self esteem and confidence. Groups are currently run by Berkshire East and South Bucks Women's Aid and by Kinara (who are running a group in Urdu). The Freedom Programme is sometimes used as part of a child protection plan. Three Freedom programmes, with crèche, are being run on 3 different Children's Centre sites. In quarters 1 and 2 of 2010/11, 52 adults have attended the programmes, each of whom have at least one child under 5.

The Sanctuary Scheme provides extra security in the homes of victims of domestic abuse (where the offender is no longer living). In 2010/11, there were 13 referrals to the Scheme with 8 of the referrals being carried out at a cost of £2,100. The estimated costs of treating these 8 cases as homeless, if Sanctuary had not been carried out would have cost £69,256, therefore demonstrating a huge cost savings. Feedback from one of the clients 6 months following installation of the security was also favourable.

### **MARAC**

Between April 2010 and March 2011, 210 'high risk' cases were managed through the MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) with 22% being identified as repeat victims. 272 children were identified to be living in these households (including repeat cases).

### **Men's Programme**

The men's programme is run by Slough Borough Council, Children's Social Care staff. This is a 8 week programme for up to 10 men which supports clients to understand the impact of their behaviour on their partners and child(ren). The feedback from attendees and professionals about the programme has been very positive.

### **PICADA (Positive Intervention for Children Affected by Domestic Abuse)**

PICADA is a 12 week support group for children running alongside a parallel group for their mothers, following domestic abuse. The main purpose of the group is to give children an opportunity to move beyond what has happened in their family in a safe and therapeutic way. Facilitators of the group are currently all SBC employees and each group is planned according to what resources (crucially staff) are available. The most recent group ran from September – December 2010 with six children attending. Positive feed-back on the impact of this programme has been received from schools.

### **East Berkshire Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator**

The Safer Slough Partnership part-funds an East Berkshire Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator. The post is managed by Thames Valley Police and the main purpose of the post is, "To reduce domestic violence in East Berkshire by co-ordinating a multi-agency approach to the problem, including preventative work that addresses both victims and offenders." The post-holder is responsible for co-ordinating the delivery of the Slough Domestic Abuse Strategy. The post-holder reports to both the Safer Slough Partnership and the Local Safeguarding Children's Board.

## **5.6 Outcomes from local domestic abuse services**

During 2011.12 outcomes data for 46 clients were received from the refuge and resettlement services, this is shown below:



### **Economic Well being**

- **100%** (50 out of 50 clients) clients maximised their **income opportunity** (inc benefits)
- **88%** (15 out of 17 clients) have **reduced debt** levels

### **Education**

- **76%** (19 out of 25 clients) participated in **training**
- **52%** (10 out of the 19) achieving a **qualification**
- **89%** (34 out of 38 clients) **established contact with external services/groups**

### **Health**

- **73%** (17 out of 23 clients) manage their **physical health better**
- **55%** (12 out of 22 clients) manage their **mental health better**
- **33%** (1 out of 3 clients) manage their substance **misuse issues better**

### **Staying Safe**

- **80%** (29 out of 36 clients) has **maintained their accommodation**
- **70%** (33 out of 47 clients) has secured/obtained **settled accommodation**
- **83%** (36 out of 43 clients) minimising the **harm/risk of harm from others**

### **Making a positive contribution**

- **85%** (41 out of 48 clients) has **more confidence** and choice and/or involvement and/or control

## **5.7 Recommendations for the commissioning of a new integrated service**

Led by the Joint Commissioning Team, the local authority has been working with partners on a strategic review of domestic abuse services. This review has recommended the commissioning of a new coordinated approach to service provision, which will include the following elements:

### **Crisis Intervention**

- Intensive Family Support Service: This element of the service will support families with children to live safely in their own home, ensuring parents care for their children appropriately and effectively. This service will be available to all children who are considered Children in Need or have Child Protection Plans, and will include reunification work to enable children to return home.
- Specialist Independent Domestic Abuse Advocates; This element will provide short term intensive support to high risk individuals and their families as defined by CAADA DASH risk Indicator
- Refuge Accommodation to support high risk women and their children experiencing domestic abuse when the option of staying at home is no longer safe/viable.

### **Early Intervention and prevention**

- Targeted psychological interventions for children and young people who have been involved in or witnessed domestic abuse, including one to one and group work.
- Individual consultations / appointments on a flexible basis at Children's Centres, supported by crèche services where required
- Parenting programmes and small group work for parents and young children at Children's Centres supported by crèche services where required.

- Staff training and development to enable them to identify signs of domestic abuse at the earliest opportunity and know how to refer children and young people to support.
- Staff training and development to enable work with perpetrators.
- Floating Outreach and Resettlement Support Service: This service should provide floating outreach and resettlement support for Slough residents currently or recently experiencing domestic abuse, and who are considered to be at medium level of risk
- Clear referral routes so that all agencies working with children and young people understand how to refer cases appropriately

#### 5.8 **Case studies**

See attached.

#### 6. **Comments of Other Committees**

Nil

#### 7. **Conclusion**

Slough has comparatively high levels of domestic abuse and this abuse is having a significant and detrimental impact on the well-being of children in Slough. The re-commissioning of domestic abuse services should lead to better service provision and enhanced protection for children and vulnerable adults.

#### 8. **Appendices Attached**

Appendix 1: Case Studies

Appendix 2: Domestic Abuse Strategy

Appendix 3: Domestic Abuse Plan

#### 9. **Background Papers**

None. Data was provided by Thames Valley Police, Education and Children Services, SBC, Berkshire East & South Bucks Women's Aid and Kinara Asian Women's Service.