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## **Overview and Scrutiny Management Board 15<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

### **Report of the Director of Housing**

### **Forced Marriage and Honour Based Abuse Overview**

#### **Purpose**

1. To provide Overview and Scrutiny Management Board with an overview of Forced Marriage (FM) and Honour Based Abuse (HBA) work within Dudley and the partnership approach that Safe and Sound, Dudley's Community Safety Partnership are taking.

#### **Recommendations**

2. It is recommended:-
  - That the Board notes the contents of the report
  - That the Board gives consideration to any particular area of the work relating to the Forced Marriage and Honour Based Abuse agenda that it would wish to scrutinise in more detail in future.

#### **Background**

3. The concept of 'honour' is for some communities extremely important. To compromise a family's 'honour' is to bring shame and this can have severe consequences. Individuals are expected to behave in a way that protects perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/or honour. When behaviour is considered to breach this expectation, it is thought to bring shame on the family and/or community. The punishment for bringing dishonour can be emotional abuse, physical abuse, family disownment and in some cases even murder.
4. In most honour-based abuse cases there are multiple perpetrators from the immediate family, sometimes the extended family and occasionally the community at large.



5. Honour based abuse will often go hand in hand with forced marriages, although this is not always the case.
6. Forced marriage is distinct from an arranged marriage because in arranged marriages, although families may take a leading role in choosing the partners, the choice of whether or not to consent to the marriage remains with the potential spouses. In a forced marriage one or both potential spouses do not or cannot give their consent.
7. Practices such as Forced Marriage and so-called Honour-Based Abuse are extreme forms of violence against individuals, and are deeply harmful, both physically and psychologically, victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.
8. Governance

Priorities for the Community Safety Partnership are identified through Dudley Borough's Strategic Assessment and consultations and in line with legislative requirements. 2019/20 priorities will include:-

- Tackling and Reducing Violent Crime (including gang and knife related crime)
- Reducing Reoffending (including links to Youth Offending Service – under 18's and First Time Entrants)
- Reducing Victimisation (including **Domestic Violence and Abuse, Violence Against Women and Girls Agenda**, Community Cohesion and Hate Crime)
- Reducing Vulnerability – (including Substance Misuse, Mental Health, **Modern Slavery**, Prevent, **Counter Extremism** and Community Cohesion)
- Reducing Burglaries (links to organised car crime)
- Anti-Social Behaviour

9. Although there also links with the Counter Extremism and Modern Slavery agendas, the Forced Marriage and Honour Based abuse work stream is currently overseen within the wider Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse agenda. Work has been led via Dudley's Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategic Group, a sub group of safe and sound, Dudley's Community Safety Partnership as part of their overarching action plan.
10. There are clear links with Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership and Dudley Health and Wellbeing Boards.



## 11. Prevalence

Forced Marriage / Honour Based Abuse are 'hidden crimes' and the figures do not reflect the full scale of the abuse.

## 12. Work has been undertaken by the regional task and finish group into data sets and prevalence across the region, with the following learning and significant concerns around accuracy of data:

- Lack of consistency of information across returns, not recorded in the same way
- Limited response by only a very small number of our regional and local organisations
- National information is broken down differently, and for example within one organisation is based on volume of calls rather than users which can also include professionals seeking advice
- Hidden crime – under reported.
- Issue of data not being robust to form/base any judgements

## 13. Data is not recorded as a matter of course on our current systems within Dudley MBC, although this is something that has been requested for the liquid logic system.

## 14. In data for July – October 2019, MARAC (Domestic Abuse Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference - where high risk victims are discussed) received referrals for 2 cases where forced marriage was identified, and 3 where Honour Based Abuse had been identified.

## 15. Activity Undertaken

- FM / HBA are now standing agenda items on Dudley's Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategic Group
- Incorporated into Dudley's Domestic Abuse Strategy available to view at: <https://www.dudleysafeandsound.org/domesticabuse>
- Incorporated into DMBC workforce guidance (document shared with Partners to use as appropriate) available to view at: <https://connect.dudley.gov.uk/support/Pages/Health-and-Wellbeing/Domestic-Violence--Abuse.aspx>
- Specific training has been delivered
- Local Self-assessment developed and completed by key partners
- Mapping exercise of support services is currently taking place (including referral routes and service user feedback)



- Asking service providers to collect victims experiences and feedback on service provision where possible via existing feedback channels within services
- Improvements to reporting and recording systems (ongoing)
- Local Harmful practices Conference held 20.11.19, including a presentation from a survivor
- Building links with and between partners locally and regionally
- Input to and attendance at West Midlands regional meetings

#### 16. Communications and resources

- Included as part of Safe and Sound Communications plan
  - including messages as part of '16 Days of Action Against Domestic Abuse' (November - December 2019)
  - Specific briefings / communications to schools and elected members
- Website
  - Dedicated pages for: Domestic Abuse, Forced Marriage/ Honour Based Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls (FGM)
- E-learning
  - Free online training is available to access at:  
<https://www.dudleysafeandsound.org/forcedmarriage>
- Educational resources
  - Educational resources help hub page of the website includes resources for those that work with children and young people  
<https://www.dudleysafeandsound.org/educationalresources>

#### 17. Support for Victims

Locally, specialist Domestic Abuse services work with Victims of Forced Marriage and Honour Based Abuse, this includes our refuge provider.

Additional support for victims to access is highlighted on the safe and sound website <https://www.dudleysafeandsound.org/forcedmarriage>

#### 18. Next Steps

- Explore and confirm training offer with Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership going forward
- Domestic Abuse forum refresh
- Identify new work streams with partners
- Continue to engage with regional work



## 19. Links to the Council Plan, Corporate Priorities and the Borough Vision

The Forced Marriage / Honour Based Abuse agenda aligns with the corporate priority of 'stronger, safer communities', however it could be linked to many aspects of the Council Plan, in particular:

- Educational Outcomes: Closing The Gap For Disadvantaged Pupils:
  - Children's Social Care: Building Strong Partnerships; Safeguarding In Practice
  - Adult Social Care: Reducing Social Isolation
  - Health & Wellbeing: Growing Resilient Communities
  - Housing: Supporting Vulnerable People
20. The Forced Marriage / Honour Based Abuse agenda links to '#HOME Of Warm Welcomes and Close-Knit Communities' of the Borough vision 2030: A place of healthy, resilient, safe communities with high aspirations and the ability to shape their own future.

## Finance

21. There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report.

## Law

22. There is numerous legislation that applies to practices of Forced Marriage / Honour Based Abuse, including

- The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 amended in 2012 by the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims (Amendment) Act 2012 to include causing or allowing serious physical harm (equivalent to grievous bodily harm) to a child or vulnerable adult'
- Violence Against Women And Girls Strategy 2010, 2016 – 2020
  - Position statement on male victims of crimes considered in the cross-Government strategy on ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) 2019
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (makes it a criminal offence to force someone to marry)



- Counter Extremism Strategy 2015 – Illegal Cultural Practices (pg.38)
- The Serious Crime Act 2015 section 76: offence of “controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship”

### **Equality Impact**

23. There are no equality impact implications arising directly from this report.
24. Forced marriage and Honour Based Abuse affects people from many communities and cultures and individuals with protected characteristics - for example, people from black and minority ethnic communities; refugees and asylum seekers; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual people; and disabled people.
25. Work being undertaken in respect of Forced marriage and Honour Based Abuse will not negatively impact on people with different protected characteristics
26. However, some communities may be more likely to engage in these practices than others and this needs to be borne in mind when planning and delivering work and services
27. Work will have a positive effect on children and young people who may be affected by Forced marriage and Honour Based Abuse

### **Human Resources/Organisational Development**

28. Whilst this report does not have any immediate organisational development/HR or transformational implications, it is important to build the confidence of the workforce in respect of issues relating to all forms of Domestic Abuse and to ensure that the Council is meeting its statutory requirements and safeguarding individuals, families and communities
29. A DMBC workplace domestic abuse guidance document has been developed and agreed by unions and HR. This was formally launched internally as part of ‘16 Days of Action Against Domestic Abuse’ on December 5<sup>th</sup> 2019 and includes reference to staff who may be experiencing Forced marriage and Honour Based Abuse.

### **Commercial/Procurement**

30. There are no commercial or procurement implications arising directly from this report.



## Health, Wellbeing and Safety

31. Forced marriage and Honour Based Abuse can affect any individual or community. It can lead to the physical and mental ill-health of victims and their families, community resilience can be undermined and there can be an increase inequalities in health.

Work around this agenda will have a positive impact on the safety of communities - both actual and perceived

There are not any negative health, wellbeing or safety implications with continuing to develop work. Conversely, taking work forward on the Forced marriage and Honour Based Abuse agenda will improve health, wellbeing and safety outcomes for individuals within the Borough



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