

**COMMUNITY SAFETY  
AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Thursday, 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2011 at 6.00 p.m.  
in Committee Room 2, The Council House, Dudley

**PRESENT:-**

Councillor Kettle (Chairman)  
Councillor Cotterill (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillors Attwood, Burston, Caunt, Foster, Mrs D Harley, Mrs P Martin,  
Ryder, Ms Wood and Zada.

**OFFICERS**

Assistant Director of Corporate Resources (Customer Services),  
(Directorate of Corporate Resources), (Lead Officer to the Committee),  
Assistant Director of Policy and Improvement, The Drugs and Alcohol  
Team Manager and Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator, (All Chief Executive's  
Directorate), Assistant Director of Children and Families and Head of  
Service, Safeguarding and Review Unit, Head of Service Social Services  
(All Directorate of Children's Services), Head of Service Private Sector  
Housing (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services),  
Principal Solicitor and Miss K Fellows, (Directorate of Corporate  
Resources).

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE**

Mr N Bucktin – Dudley Primary Care Trust, Mr G Shabar and Ms F Bashir  
(The Lye Project) and Superintendent S Johnson (West Midlands Police).

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11. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No Member made a declaration of interest in accordance with the  
Members' Code of Conduct in respect of any matter to be considered at  
the meeting.

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12. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the  
9th June, 2011, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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13. **PUBLIC FORUM**

No matters were raised under this Agenda item.

14. CONSIDERATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY) REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY THE PETITIONS OFFICER.

No Petitions had been referred to the Committee.

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15. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY AND SERVICE PROVISION IN THE BOROUGH OF DUDLEY

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted detailing domestic abuse service policy and provision in Dudley. Details of the Domestic Abuse services in Dudley and funding providers were appended to the report submitted.

In presenting the report submitted, the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator made particular reference to the data collected which indicated that domestic abuse was more prevalent in certain areas, the links between alcohol and domestic abuse, the developments in domestic abuse policy, multi agency working, the Domestic Abuse Service Improvement Review and Domestic Abuse provision in the Dudley Borough.

The Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator outlined the contribution of the Directorates of Children's Services and Adult Community and Housing Services, inviting representatives from those Directorates to provide further information in relation to the involvement of their Directorates.

Arising from the presentation of the report submitted Members raised questions and the Assistant Director of Children and Families, the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator and Superintendent S Johnson responded as follows:-

There was not a national review in relation to Domestic Abuse, however locally there were strategies and action plans formulated which would be implemented.

It was reported that the Domestic Abuse Service Improvement Review would result in a draft report upon findings being presented to the Strategic Board to consider and it was expected that following that an Action Plan would be developed.

That Children's Services were inspected in relation to services provided for Safeguarding.

That crime rates had generally reduced and there was a high possibility that this had resulted from the economic downturn impacting upon the general public's budgetary positions with less money being expended on alcohol which had led to less violence per se.

That a significant proportion of domestic abuse crime remained unreported and this largely remained an area of hidden crime.

In relation to the percentage of reported domestic abuse crime it was stated that there was under reporting amongst male victims.

That there were fewer reports of domestic homicide within the Dudley Borough when compared to its neighbouring boroughs.

In relation to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender population it was reported that the Individual Domestic Abuse Advisors referred to in the report submitted would provide support to anyone who wished to access the service, however services were tailored to those who accessed it.

That the Support Workers employed by the "Staying Put" Service would be in a position to deal with male victims of domestic abuse.

That recently the Public Protection Unit had reported a reduction in the number of male victims reporting crimes of domestic abuse.

The purpose built refuge referred to at paragraph 18 of the report submitted would provide accommodation for male victims of domestic abuse.

RESPECT operated a national helpline for male victims of domestic abuse and there were national helpline numbers available for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and male victims.

It was stated that although there had been budget cuts within victim support services and some funding had been withdrawn, the Visual Evidence for Victims Service remained available. Details in relation to the service were outlined including taking photographs of victims' injuries in order to collate evidence for a prosecution should a reluctant victim wish to report the crime at a later date.

It was further stated that the above Service was still offered to victims via Individual Domestic Abuse Advisors and refuges and the number of victims accessing the above service were considered when funding for the service was addressed.

In relation to the My Space, My Time Service it was stated that Barnardos would conduct work with young people prior to the full service being offered and other agencies would also become involved with young people who witnessed domestic abuse.

The Head of Service of the Safeguarding and Review Unit referred to that part of the report that referred to the contribution of the Directorate of Children's Services, making particular reference to the Domestic Abuse Response Team. He referred to their utilising the Barnardos screening tool in order to identify the scale of risk to children who had witnessed domestic abuse. He referred to the four scales of risk and the action that would be taken in relation to each scale.

In responding to Members questions, the Head of Service of the Safeguarding Review Unit reported as follows:-

- In 2010/11 on average approximately 6% of notifications made to children's social care in respect of children living in a household where there had been a domestic abuse incident lead to more formal action being taken by children's social care, which would include an Initial or Core Assessment, Child Section 47 child protection investigation or child protection conference;
- Approximately 25% of domestic abuse notifications related to a household where there had already been a domestic incident reported to the police with one quarter of the above being repeat referrals occurring within three months of the previous incident.
- That on average children remained in the care of the Local Authority for between six and twelve months, however the time scale would be dependant upon the content of the child's' Care Plan.

In responding to questions from Members', Superintendent Johnson reported that:-

- Police Strategic Assessments and operation tactics were undertaken on a monthly basis and crime reduction groups, substance misuse groups and the Strategic Board were engaged with in relation to domestic abuse.
- Domestic abuse was dealt with by specialist Police Officers who had adopted a multi agency working approach. He also reported that drugs and alcohol abuse were the recognised causation factors in relation to domestic abuse together with major sporting events, with police carrying out strategic assessments and factoring in dates of future sporting events.
- There was a Borough wide Public Prosecution Unit based in Halesowen which was headed by a Senior Detective and two Detective Inspectors.
- Domestic abuse was a Borough wide problem with trends evidencing that those victims in affluent areas were more likely to report incidents of domestic abuse.
- Should there be a crime in progress that would generate an immediate police response.

The Drugs and Alcohol Team Manager and Domestic Violence Co-ordinator reported as follows:-

- That Perpetrator Programmes were available, both statutory and voluntary, however programmes were intense and further evaluation was required in respect of the effectiveness of Programmes and their cost.

- The Lye Project was supported by two senior Social Workers and a full and part time Community Worker.
- That the Primary Care Trust funding remained in place for the WHAT Project.

In responding to Members' concerns relating to waiting lists in respect of the My Space My Time Service, the Head of Service of the Safeguarding and Review Unit, the Drugs and Alcohol Team Manager and Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator reported that other professionals and Barnardos would become involved with children who witnessed domestic abuse in order to ensure that they were receiving support from other agencies.

It was further reported that in view of the capacity of the Service referrals had currently been suspended.

In responding to Members' concerns in relation to the Lye Project, the Drugs and Alcohol Team Manager reported on the funding received by the Project from the Local Authority and indicated that the Project provided other services and was not a specialist domestic abuse service.

Mr Bucktin, representative of the Primary Care Trust reported on the National Health Service contribution in relation to tackling domestic abuse, indicating that a multi agency approach had been adopted in terms of prevention work and work was also undertaken with the drinks industry. He also reported that trends evidenced that the main problems for victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse were in relation to mental health.

In responding to a question from a Member, the Head of Service of the Safeguarding and Review Unit reported that a member of the Domestic Abuse Response Team worked for the Mental Health Trust and would work with Russells Hall Hospital should concerns be raised in their Accident and Emergency Department in relation to domestic abuse.

The Drugs and Alcohol Team Manager indicated that staff training was undertaken with hospital staff in relation to domestic abuse with staff being provided with the relevant contact telephone numbers for such referrals.

The Head of Service Private Sector Housing, reported on the contribution of the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services as outlined in the report submitted, making particular reference to the investment made to build a purpose built refuge and new self contained accommodation.

Mr G Shabar reported on the Lye Project, indicating that the Centre was an access point for different types of social care services and did not solely deal with victims of domestic abuse and there was not a specific member of staff who dealt with incidents of domestic abuse, with the project being supported by two senior Social Workers and a full and part time Community Worker.

In responding to questions from Members, Mr Shabar advised that although some victims had obtained two years leave to remain in the Country they were unable to access public funds or benefits and as a result of this, the Centre could make an application to access funding, should the victim meet the specified criteria for such funding.

Mr Shabar provided details surrounding No Recourse to Public Funds and of cost implications to the local authority when supporting and placing victims with No Recourse to Public Funds.

In responding to Members' concerns in relation to the Lye Project Mr Shabar reported that the Project was an access point for hard to reach communities and highlighted that the Project provided other services and was not a specialist domestic abuse service and that the work surrounding domestic abuse had arisen from an unmet need and was in addition to ongoing work loads.

Arising from the presentation of the report submitted it was

#### RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the report, submitted detailing domestic abuse policy and service provision in the borough of Dudley, be noted.
- (2) That a further report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee in relation to the findings of the Domestic Abuse Service Improvement Review.
- (3) That the Head of Service of Private Sector Housing be requested to provide Members with details of the location of the refuge referred to in the report submitted.
- (4) That the Lead Officer be requested to recommend to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services that the position in relation to the shortfalls in the My Space, My Time Service be investigated.

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17. TO CONSIDER WHETHER TO REQUEST THE ATTENDANCE OF ANY SAFE AND SOUND BOARD MEMBER OR THE PROVISION OF ANY INFORMATION AT A FUTURE MEETING IN RELATION TO THE COMMUNITY SAFETY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME.
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Following discussion on this issue it was:

#### RESOLVED

That the attendance of any Safe and Sound Board Member or the provision of any information at the next meeting be not pursued.

The meeting ended at 7.45p.m.

CHAIRMAN