

EIT Review of Domestic Violence

Response from Executive Scrutiny Committee

Executive Scrutiny Committee noted the proposed scope and project plan for the review at its meeting on 10 June 2009 and received baseline information on 28 July 2009.

Options Challenge

At its meeting on 5 January 2010, Executive Scrutiny Committee was presented with progress in relation to the review and initial options and highlighted the following issues:

- The need to establish that the contribution to Harbour represented the best value for money.
- The introduction of equality training in schools was referred to in the National Strategy on Violence Against Woman and Girls
- In cases where people could not get access to the refuge, they could access other general accommodation e.g. Tristar Housing, homelessness hostels. Members suggested that other Registered Social Landlords also might be able to assist with accommodation outside the refuge
- Members queried the availability of funds from Supporting People
- It was anticipated that any provision of intermediate accommodation would reduce the average length of stay at the refuge from 6 to 3 months
- Members referred to other funding that might contribute to dealing with domestic violence. However, it was noted that the scope of this review had been limited to dedicated domestic violence services.
- Men could not be accommodated at the refuge but currently constituted a small percentage (2%) of cases
- Key point 16 of the National Strategy on Violence against Woman and Girls indicated that School Governors would be supported and trained to address gender equality. Members suggested that this could be commence immediately and asked officers to progress this
- It was noted that Harbour produced a performance report which identified where referrals originated from
- Outcomes from the review of the Specialist Team in CESC should be included in the overall review

At its meeting on 1 June 2010, Executive Scrutiny Committee received a report summarising the findings of the review together with proposed recommendations to Cabinet. A representative of Harbour was also in attendance at the meeting to answer Member questions.

The Committee supported the proposed recommendations together with the following comments:

- The Committee recognised that the current economic climate placed increasing demands on domestic violence services and that it would therefore be inadvisable to look for net reductions at the present time but that efforts should continue to be made to ensure that the service was cost effective and represented value for money in order to respond to the increasing demands
- The Committee asked that further work be undertaken to assess the level of need and identify funding opportunities to help children to remain at their own schools (where appropriate)
- The Committee accepted that there was a case for raising awareness of domestic violence services in specific areas of the Borough although it was recognised that this would place additional demand on services
- In respect of recommendation 5, the Committee asked that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People be added to the Council's representatives on the Domestic Violence Strategy Group alongside the Cabinet Members for Housing & Community Safety and for Adult Services & Health, as Member Champions for domestic violence services