

EIT Review of Domestic Violence

Summary

This report updates the Committee on progress in relation to the EIT Review of Domestic Violence. *Text which has been amended in response to points raised at the meeting of the Committee on 5 January is shown in italics.*

Prospective Recommendations

It is proposed to make recommendations to Cabinet along the following lines:-

- i) note that in the current climate it would be inadvisable to look for net reductions in the Council's expenditure on domestic violence services, but that efforts should continue to maximise the impact of investment
- ii) note the position in respect of the Domestic Violence Team within CESC (paragraph 7).
- iii) all Council services to ensure that they are represented at an appropriate level at the multi-agency Domestic Violence Strategy Group, and that their activities and performance are reported to the Group in a timely manner
- iv) the Strategy Group should review its links with other multi-agency partnership bodies including the Safer Stockton Partnership, the Children's Trust Board, the Health & Wellbeing Partnership, the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Adult Safeguarding Board, and the links between the Domestic Violence Strategy for the Borough and other key strategies developed by these partnerships.
- v) that the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People be added to the Council representatives on the Domestic Violence Strategy Group (paragraph 13).

Detail

1. The baseline /challenge stage of this review showed that the Council in 2009/10 spent approximately £558k on domestic violence services, as follows:

	£k
(a) services provided by Harbour	400
(b) specialist team in CESC	142
(c) 50% cost of Domestic Violence Co-ordinator in Community Safety team (shared with Hartlepool BC)	<u>16</u>
	558

Members will recall the previous comments about the cost-effectiveness of services provided via Harbour, due to their terms and conditions of employment and economies of scale from operating across several localities (i.e. the bulk of services are already outsourced and 'joint' with other authorities). Most of the Harbour services are provided under a 'preferred provider model' of partnership, endorsed by the Safer Stockton Partnership, which is intended to develop long-term stability in service delivery and the growth of local capacity. *A copy of the latest version of the Baseline / Challenge document, of which an earlier version was approved by the Committee at its meeting of 15 July 2009, is attached as **Appendix A** (this includes the agreed scope of the review). A further comparison of terms and conditions of employment is attached as **Appendix B**.*

2. It proved relatively easy to identify the spend and performance in relation to Harbour, which has been reported over a period of years to the multi-agency Domestic Violence Strategy Group, but more difficult to get the corresponding data in respect of the CESC team, which has not in the past been the subject of multi-agency discussion.
3. The Audit Commission inspection team for CAA have noted, via the Housing Inspectorate, the rise in caseload of approximately 20% over the last two years (i.e. 2007 to 2009) and have stated that they intend to examine the issue in more detail as part of the second year of the CAA (having identified it just before their deadline for the first year's report). Figures from Harbour indicate even larger increases between 2007/08 and 2009/10 (projections based on first 7 months to end October) of 43% for referrals and 31% for engagement.
4. The Audit Commission at national level produced a study in August 2009, entitled 'When it comes to the Crunch', which attempts to model the likely effects of the current recession based on the experiences of the recession of the 1980s and 1990s, and predicts a further increase in domestic violence as the recession develops.
5. On 25 November 2009 the then Government launched its new National Strategy on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). Although this is a slightly different categorisation from 'Domestic Violence', there is a

substantial overlap: recent figures from Harbour show that 98% of clients are female. The Strategy encapsulates 75 'key actions' and will lead to a significant increase in expectations of requirements from local authorities and some of their key partners. A schedule of key actions together with initial comments is attached as **Appendix C**. *Following discussion at the Committee meeting on 5 January the issue of key action 16, in relation to Governor training, has been raised with the School Governor Support Manager, and he is taking action on this issue. In relation to item 43, the Council's Corporate Management Team has agreed that the Corporate Director for Children, Education and Social Care will be VAWG champion. The Head of Community Protection has also been invited to join the Local Safeguarding Children Board to ensure that domestic violence issues are covered. The attitude of the new Government to the National Strategy on VAWG is not yet clear.*

6. Managers within CESC identified that their internal arrangements were not optimally efficient and effective. Their specialist team had two key responsibilities, for initial assessment of child protection cases with domestic violence as the prevalent factor, and for 'brief interventions' with the families concerned. Work volumes were as follows:-

	2008/09	2009/10
initial assessments	468	661
cases ongoing following initial assessment	77	388

7. It was initially agreed that a 'mini-review' of the CESC Domestic Violence team would be completed by Christmas. However, this plan was overtaken by other events.

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council commissioned Cordis Bright Consultants to complete an evaluation of contact, referral and assessment arrangements. The evaluation was carried out in line with Ofsted standards and criteria for annual unannounced inspections.

Three consultants conducted the evaluation on 3 and 4 November 2009. They sampled the quality and effectiveness of contact, referral and assessment arrangements and their impact on safeguarding children and young people. The process included reviewing electronic case records and observations of social workers and managers. The consultants also conducted interviews with social workers and team managers from the Emergency Duty Team, First Contact, Duty Team and Domestic Violence Team.

From the evidence gathered, the inspection identified a number of areas where the contact, referral and assessment arrangements were delivered satisfactorily in accordance with national guidance, but also identified some areas where systems, processes and practice needed to be improved.

In particular, it was considered that there was evidence of a lack of understanding regarding domestic violence particularly with regard to the impact on children and young people, which was demonstrated by the lack of challenge and isolation of incidents rather than looking at the wider context of the information held on families.

As a result of this exercise and the internal CESC assessment of the ongoing functioning of the team, a decision was taken to fundamentally review the role and remit of the Domestic Violence Team. *Following the review of the CESC Domestic Violence (DV) Team, consideration of the recommended potential options for future service provision has taken place. A preferred service model has been identified and following liaison with HR colleagues this is now subject to consultation with the staff affected by these proposals. This is due to be completed by 1 June 2010.*

The preferred service model is to disband the DV Team and to create a specialist DV function within an enhanced Duty Team. This would involve the creation of a Deputy Team Manager post with a lead responsibility for DV, together with two specialist DV Social Worker posts.

As this is achieved by combining the Social Worker establishments from the current teams, no growth in social work posts is assumed. Consequently, there are no financial implications arising from these changes.

The Team Manager and Deputy Team Manager would share the supervisory responsibilities for the wider staff group between them.

This proposal combines DV expertise with a strong focus on safeguarding in one team which ensures a single pathway for case progression through the child protection system, thereby increasing consistency of practice.

More details can be provided following the completion of the consultation period and formal decisions regarding the way forward.

8. An analysis of expenditure on Domestic Violence covering the four Teesside authorities has recently (December 2009) been undertaken, as set out below:

Area	Population*	Spend in 2009-10	Cost per head of population
Stockton	189,100	£443,741	£2.35
Hartlepool	91,100	£415,179	£4.56
Redcar and Cleveland	139,500	£765,046	£5.48
Middlesbrough	138,400	£321,113	£2.32

*Based on 2006 census data.

It should be noted that the expenditure for Middlesbrough does not include services in respect of Sexual Violence (e.g. rape and sexual abuse counselling), whereas this is included for the other three boroughs.

9. Benchmarking across the Tees Valley has also been carried out in respect of the costs to the Supporting People budget of both Refuge and Floating Support Services, as set out in the tables below.

(a) Refuge

Annual contract value £	Total weekly support hours	Capacity	Hours per service user per week	Cost per support hour £	Authority	Service Description	Unit costs £
92,734.83	76.00	8	9.50	23.38	D	2	222.07
103,430.79	140.00	11	12.73	14.15	M	3	180.13
129,389.91	107.50	8	13.44	23.06	Stockton	3	309.84
139,394.71	117.95	10	11.80	22.64	H	3	267.04

As will be seen, the Stockton hourly rate is the second most expensive of the four, but comparable with authorities D and H. Authority M has a much lower hourly cost. Hours per service user in Stockton are the highest leading to highest overall unit cost.

(b) Floating Support Services

Annual contract value £	Total weekly support hours	Capacity	Hours per service user per week	Cost per support hour £	Authority	Service Description	Unit costs £
77,749.00	50.00	25	2.00	29.79	D	4	59.58
26,898.48	70.00	11	6.36	7.36	Stockton	4	46.85
34,712.10	42.00	12	3.50	15.83	H	4	55.42

Stockton has the lowest hourly cost by a considerable margin, but provides significantly more hours per service user (i.e. a higher level of support) so, although Stockton is still the least expensive of the three on a unit cost basis, the margin of difference is smaller.

10. In relation to 2010/11 funding it is known that a Government targeted grant for the employment of IDVAs (Independent Domestic Violence Advisers) to support victims of domestic violence through court processes, will end at March 2010. Partner agencies within Cleveland Criminal Justice Board have argued that continuation of this function should be a priority, but are unwilling / unable to contribute to the costs. In 2007/08 the Council made available £85,000 of headroom for domestic violence, and the funding has been used to support service delivery across the three year period 2007 – 2010. *A recent (February 2010) Home Office reduction in allocation to the Safer Stockton Partnership of £31,000 will result in a further reduction of £1,000 in funding allocated to Harbour and in April 2010 the Home Office advised of its intention to re-direct some of its funding away from Community Safety Partnerships into Local Criminal Justice Boards, which may be inclined to concentrate more on the small proportion of cases which end up in the courts, rather than on preventative work.* In addition, the 'Safe at Home' target hardening scheme operated by the Council's Community Safety team at a cost of approximately £25,000 per year is not securely funded, and is highly dependent on short-term grants, and Cleveland Police have requested contributions from other parties, including the Council, towards the cost of administrative support for Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs). The full year cost for this in Stockton, across all agencies, is considered to be about £10,000. *An annual contribution of £3,000 from Community Safety budgets has now been agreed for MARAC administration.*

11. In relation to the increase in caseload, which has given rise to a waiting list for some services, Harbour has been asked to analyse how much additional funding would be required to operate without a significant waiting list, based on current (2009/10) levels of demand, and have provided the following figures:-

adults - £77,000
children - £50,000

12. One of the significant problems identified through the review process, and reported to the Domestic Violence Strategy Group, has been the insufficiency of Refuge capacity. *The Stockton Refuge is owned by Endeavour Housing Association, who retain responsibility for maintaining the shell of the building, and is operated by Harbour, who pay a fee to Endeavour for the use of the building, and is available for use by women and children only.* In 2008/09 132 of 209 referrals i.e. 63%, were declined due to no places being available at the time of referral. *Women accepted as priority homeless on the grounds of domestic violence, who cannot be accommodated in the refuge due to capacity, and all men in similar circumstances are placed in the St. James' Street hostel or satellite accommodation, all managed by Three Rivers Housing Association.* This issue has been discussed by a task group for the purpose, and the

possibility of establishing a cluster of intermediate accommodation, within close proximity of the existing refuge (so as to minimise disruption of schooling for children, and to facilitate efficient staffing arrangements, i.e. 'satellite' provision from the existing staff team at the refuge) is now being explored in further detail, *with colleagues at Tristar Homes and Harbour*. The Supporting People team have given a preliminary indication that a further £40–50,000 per year of Supporting People funding may be available for a strong proposal which would reduce 'bed blocking' at the refuge itself and assist service users to return to independent living more quickly (*reducing the average stay in the refuge itself from about six months to about three months, thereby effectively doubling refuge capacity*). An ancillary option being investigated is moving the Harbour Outreach Service from their current base in rented office accommodation in Stockton Town Centre to a property in any such cluster, so as to save on costs of rent and maximise staffing efficiencies.

13. Following discussions with Cabinet Members concerned some years ago, it was agreed that the Cabinet Members for Housing & Community Safety and for Adult Services and Health would participate in the multi-agency Domestic Violence Strategy Group. Following more recent discussions it is also recommended that the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People become a member of the group.

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