

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF CHILDREN AFFECTED BY DOMESTIC ABUSE

Summary

The sixth evidence-gathering session for the Committee's review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse will consider submissions from the Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership, Thirteen Housing Group, and Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Housing Services.

Detail

1. Mindful of the need to understand overarching 'system' co-ordination and accountability around this scrutiny topic, the **Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSSCP)** was asked to respond to the following lines of enquiry:

- *Brief overview of HSSCP (purpose, structure, etc.).*
- *Any data regarding the prevalence of children's (particularly those in their early years) exposure to domestic abuse across the Borough over the last five years.*
- *Does HSSCP highlight this issue and promote reporting routes / local support offers? If so, how / how often?*
- *Previous / current / future planned work undertaken by / involving HSSCP in relation to this scrutiny topic.*
- *Working with SBC and its partners – how does this operate; is this effective; is there anything that could strengthen current arrangements?*
- *Any organisation/s not regularly attending multi-agency meetings, actively participating in meetings / contributing to assessments and support plans? What assurance is there that the overall 'system' around domestic abuse is working (monitoring / evaluation)?*
- *Any views on key areas of future focus relating to this scrutiny topic (e.g. existing challenges that need to be addressed; national / regional / local developments that will / are likely to have an impact).*

A briefing paper has been prepared and is included within these meeting papers. The HSSCP Chair and HSSCP Business Manager are scheduled to be in attendance to give a summary of this submission and address Committee comments / questions. It is intended that the HSSCP Independent Scrutineer will also be present in a virtual capacity to join the discussions.

2. Housing services were identified during the scoping process for this review as an important area to consider regarding this scrutiny topic. As the Borough's key housing association, **Thirteen Housing Group** was asked to respond to the following questions:

- *Thirteen Housing Group's role / responsibilities in relation to this scrutiny topic.*
- *How do Thirteen staff identify at-risk individuals / families? How confident do they feel about spotting signs of domestic abuse?*
- *Are Thirteen staff aware of how to report domestic abuse? How does Thirteen promote reporting routes / local support service offers?*
- *Who / what is the responsible person / role within your organisation regarding written safeguarding policies / training / submitting referrals?*
- *Data on the number of domestic abuse-related referrals made by Thirteen to the Stockton-on-Tees Children's Hub (CHUB) in the last three years.*
- *How are staff supported in relation to domestic abuse (e.g. training course options and any available date on the uptake of these)?*

- *Working with SBC and other partners with regards domestic abuse – how does this operate; is this effective; is there anything that could strengthen current arrangements?*
- *Any views on key areas of future focus relating to this scrutiny topic (e.g. existing challenges that need to be addressed; national / regional / local developments that will / are likely to have an impact).*

A presentation has been prepared and is included within these meeting papers. Thirteen Housing Group personnel are scheduled to be in attendance to give a summary of this submission and address Committee comments / questions.

3. To ascertain the Council's housing-related role in relation to this scrutiny topic, **SBC Housing Services** was also asked to contribute to this session, with responses sought to the following:

- *SBC Housing Services' role / responsibilities in relation to this scrutiny topic.*
- *For any SBC housing staff required to visit properties across the Borough, do they feel confident about spotting signs of domestic abuse, and do they know how to report it?*
- *Data on the number of domestic abuse-related referrals made by housing services in the last three years.*
- *Working with local social housing partners regarding domestic abuse considerations – how does this operate; is this effective; is there anything that could strengthen current arrangements?*
- *Any SBC oversight of private sector housing in relation to domestic abuse (e.g. awareness-raising, promotion of reporting routes, etc.)?*
- *Any views on key areas of future focus relating to this scrutiny topic.*

A paper has been prepared and is included within these meeting papers. The SBC Assistant Director – Housing & A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees and the SBC Service Lead – Homelessness, Lettings & Nominations are scheduled to be in attendance to give a summary of this submission and address Committee comments / questions.

4. In advance of this session, Members may again wish to familiarise themselves with some associated background material in relation to this scrutiny topic:

- **Home Office: Domestic Abuse – Statutory Guidance (Jul 22)**
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62c6df068fa8f54e855dfe31/Domestic_Abuse_Act_2021_Statutory_Guidance.pdf (see pages 98-103: Agency Response to Domestic Abuse – Housing; pages 127-141: Multi-Agency Response to Domestic Abuse)
- **GOV.UK: Victims in their own right? Babies, children and young people's experiences of domestic abuse**
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/babies-children-and-young-peoples-experiences-of-domestic-abuse/victims-in-their-own-right-babies-children-and-young-peoples-experiences-of-domestic-abuse-accessible#chapter-six-the-multi-agency-response-in-universal-and-targeted-support> (see Chapter six: The multi-agency response in universal and targeted support)
- **Stockton-on-Tees Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2028**
https://www.stockton.gov.uk/media/3841/Domestic-Abuse-Strategy-2022-28-Accessible/pdf/Stockton-on-Tees_Domestic_Abuse_Strategy_2022-28_Final_Accessible.pdf?m=1674053753577

5. A copy of the agreed scope and plan for this review is included for information.

Name of Contact Officer: Gary Woods
Post Title: Senior Scrutiny Officer
Telephone No: 01642 526187
Email Address: gary.woods@stockton.gov.uk