

TITLE	Wokingham Domestic Abuse Update
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 November 2022
WARD	None specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Place and Growth - Steve Moore

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

To provide an update on the Borough's domestic abuse delivery plan as requested by the Committee.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee consider the report and offer comment.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Key information about the progress on the local domestic abuse strategy 2021-2024 is also outlined as requested by the committee. As part of the update, three local service providers Cranstoun, Berkshire Women's Aid and Kaleidoscopic will present to provide information about the service provision delivered by their respective organisations locally.

Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021- 2024 Update

The Wokingham Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021 – 2024 is underpinned by two action plans – one which is delivered via the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board focused on delivering the council's duties under the DA Act 2021 and the other which covers wider domestic abuse support and delivered via the Domestic Abuse Networking Group.

Key achievements (December 2021 – September 2022)

- Communications plan in place to drive awareness raising activities
- Suite of video clips created to aid accessibility and increase resident's awareness of support options - for use on social media and WBC website ([Domestic abuse information videos - Wokingham Borough Council](#)).
- Domestic Abuse Housing Specialist appointed and embedded in homelessness team
- Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation process commenced – best practice of housing providers
- Established a Thames Valley wide group to explore options linked to safe accommodation which are shared gaps in provision
- Formalised working agreement with BWA linked to support in the Wokingham DA refuge
- WBC and Multi agency training plan put in place to upskill practitioners responding to residents affected by domestic abuse (1089 practitioners accessed DA training 1/1/2022 – 30/9/2022)
- Creation of domestic abuse directory within main WBC Directory of services

- Review undertaken of literature, resources, website to ensure inclusive and accessible
- Increased working with Thames Valley Victim and Witness Group to improve experiences for Wokingham residents going through the civil and criminal courts
- Support for school staff in responding to notifications and disclosures of domestic abuse including creation of information booklet and attendance at designated safeguarding lead meetings
- Input on Suicide Prevention Toolkit to ensure the links between domestic abuse, mental health and suicide are covered
- Strong, focused and well supported Partnership Board and Networking Group meetings
- Increased domestic abuse support being brought into Wokingham – eg the Building Resilience and Valuing Emotions project (BRAVE) – a project working with victims of domestic abuse with additional emotional or psychological difficulties and a children’s therapist (CHiSVA) and PACT (from April 2023).
- Wokingham Partnership Board showcased as best practice by the DLUHC.

Challenges:

- **Referrals** into the local service is exceeding capacity in commissioned DA service. – It was hoped that this was a temporary surge created by the ending of lockdown restrictions. However, numbers of victims accessing the service continue to remain higher than anticipated. A growth item has been submitted to address this.
- **Adequate children & young persons provision** to support work with children and young people to ensure they are supported as victims within their own right. No specific funding was included in the domestic abuse new duties funding, that recognised the underdevelopment and lack of available resources for this area. A growth bid has also been submitted to help with this new challenge.
- There is a need to **increase the safe accommodation options** and number of refuge spaces available in the Borough (particularly for male and LGBT+ victims, those with larger families, people with disabilities or complex needs) Joint work with other LA’s in Thames Valley is being explored to look at a collaborative approach.
- Work to develop the **voice of the child** to ensure services are child centred is being further developed.
- **Perpetrator referrals** are low work to address this is underway to increase awareness of the programmes and to increase education and awareness amongst professionals about working to perpetrators and the vital contribution and impact this will have on reducing victims.
- **Embedding** good practice amongst all directorates to ensure that it becomes business as usual across all areas or council policy and practice.

Work with Refugee Communities

As part of the suite of video clips created to aid accessibility and increase resident’s awareness of support options, a specific targeted video has been produced in Ukrainian. Training sessions for the councils Refugee case workers on domestic abuse has been undertaken. This included information and support for those experiencing DA but also may be witnessing it in the households they are residing in. Training and information has also been provided about modern slavery, domestic servitude and information about police and policing in the UK.

Cranstoun - Wokingham Domestic Abuse Support Service

The following part of the report outlines some key data from Quarter 1 from the commissioned services provided by Cranstoun Domestic Abuse Service.

Outreach service – Quarter 1 2022/23.

A total of 96 referrals were made to the outreach victim/survivor service. The largest 2 referral sources were children social care including MASH (23 referrals) and self-referrals (23 referrals). There has also been an increase in the number of referrals from the council's homelessness unit demonstrating the increase of understanding and thought to be directly linked to the placement of a domestic abuse specialist now situated within the councils housing department. There has also been an increase in referrals from health professionals.

Of the 96 referrals risk assessments were completed with 87 of the cases, 35 were assessed as standard risk, 27 were medium risk and 25 were assessed as high risk.

All victims were offered bespoke one to one intervention which include safety planning, risk assessments, access to legal advice and support, support into refuge accommodation, emotional support and ongoing support with issues not relating to domestic abuse such as debt relief or management advice, access to foodbank, education training and employment and referral to health services.

Joint home visits with social care were arranged for those with particularly needs such as disability or inability to travel due to age or other constrictions. Face to face engagement continues and happens at range of venue spaces, including Cranstoun's Wokingham based location, coffee shops, children centres, garden centres. The majority of face to face is happening at the Cranstoun offices particularly now that a one stop shop and advice clinic is up and running every Thursday.

Perpetrator service

In Q1 Cranstoun received 7 referrals for the Men and Masculinities programme with no female referrals. Of the 7 referrals, 7 completed a suitability assessment and six have commenced the programme. One of clients referred was identified as a victim and was transferred to the outreach team. The referral numbers for Men and Masculinities were and continue to be extremely low, to address this, two training session have been arranged for September and October for perpetrator training awareness. The hope is that this will upskill and increase confidence in referrals for perpetrators. This will be closely monitored in Q2 and Q3.

Children & young person's service

In Q1 there was a total of 15 referrals, a total of 20 children and young people received interventions. The children and young people are offered a range of interventions including one to one, play therapy and art therapy. Interventions have continued through school summer holidays, something that has only been introduced this year and not previously offered.

Refuge service

The refuge element of the contract was separated out from the Cranstoun contract due to the fact an appropriate property could not be sourced. Berkshire Women's Aid is now managing this element of the contract. All Wokingham victims requiring refuge provision

are supported to identify appropriate accommodation this is done through Cranstoun's account to routes to support provided by the women aid federation. The Wokingham Domestic Abuse Support Service has supported 5 victims and 6 children into refuge in Q1. All victims that required refuge were successfully referred into refuge accommodation.

Service overview

Overall referral numbers remain consistently high with a current case load for the outreach team totalling 154 this equates to approximately 73.3 per full time case worker. The Safelives recommended safe caseload levels should be around 25-30.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0	£0	£0
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0	£75K – growth bid pending	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0	£75K – growth bid pending	Revenue

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
None

Cross-Council Implications
Domestic Abuse reaches across most council departments and can also impact directly and indirectly on the workforce. Workplace guidance is in place and training on domestic abuse responses are offered to all council departments.

Public Sector Equality Duty
An equalities assessment was undertaken in December 2021.

Climate Emergency – <i>This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030</i>
There will be no impact as a result of this decision on the Council's carbon neutral objective.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2
N/A

List of Background Papers
Domestic Abuse Action Plan 2021-24

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