
Meeting: Executive
Date: 15 July 2014
Subject: A Review of the Impact on Children Living with Domestic Abuse: Report of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee February 2014
Report of: Cllr Mark Versallion, Executive Member for Children's Services
Summary: The report reviews the actions taken in Children's Services following the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny meeting on Domestic Abuse.

Advising Officer: Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services
Contact Officer: Sue Tyler, Head of Child Poverty and Early Intervention
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Executive
Key Decision No
Reason for urgency/ exemption from call-in (if appropriate) N/A

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

- Promote health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable.
- Improve educational attainment.

Financial:

1. There are no financial implications from the review process.

Legal:

2. There are no legal implications for the review process.

Risk Management:

3. There are no risk implications from the review process.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

4. Not applicable.

Equalities/Human Rights:

5. Not applicable within the review process.

Public Health

6. Not applicable within the review process.

Community Safety:

7. Not applicable within the review process.

Sustainability

8. Not applicable within the review process.

Procurement:

9. Not applicable within the review process.

Overview and Scrutiny:

10. This matter has been considered by Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 25 February 2014.

RECOMMENDATIONS:**The Executive is asked to:**

1. **welcome the work of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee and consider the report from their meeting held on 25 February 2014, as set out at Appendix A; and**
2. **agree that the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be considered as part of the wider corporate review.**

Background

11. In the period since December 2013 there has been an on-going corporate review of domestic abuse activity across the Council which has been carried out by the Head of Community Safety. This will be complete by October 2014.
12. On 25 February 2014, the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held a detailed discussion regarding the impact of living in circumstances of domestic abuse/domestic violence on children.
13. The purpose of the meeting was:-
 - to increase the understanding of Members in relation to the prevalence of incidents;
 - to consider how best to support a multi-agency partnership approach to deal with the issue; and
 - to agree some outcome focused recommendations on how to enhance the offer to children in this situation.

The full report of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting is attached at Appendix A.

14. The Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) has a priority in the current year of "*Ensuring the effectiveness of safeguarding support for children living with domestic abuse, adult mental health problems and/or substance misuse*". This will involve partners implementing the actions from the previous year's review of the support for children and families living with domestic abuse and reviewing support for children where mental health and substance misuse in the family creates an additional risk factor.

Action being taken on Domestic Abuse in Children's Services following recommendations from the Overview & Scrutiny Report - February 2014 (Appendix A)

15. **Relay Project**

At the Overview and Scrutiny meeting the function of the Relay Officers was explained; namely that information is received from the police each morning regarding any callouts from the previous evening where there are school aged children in the family. The Relay Officer will then contact the school that the child/ren attend so that they are aware that there has been an incident which may impact on the child's attendance, state of emotional wellbeing, completion of homework, and other linked issues. This had been operating in certain areas of Central Bedfordshire, but was expanded in the first instance in April and a full roll-out to all schools took place in early June once an additional Relay Officer was employed.

Feedback from schools is very positive.

"The service is excellent and has really helped us to understand many of our families better – particularly when the children seem very subdued on a Monday morning. The information you provide starts conversations that would not normally take place; it is very difficult for families to come and tell me they have a problem, but they respond far better if I tell them I know about an incident and they then open up and often disclose more than was realised."

Recommendation 1

16. **Transformation Funding**

At the end of March 2014 the Council received a grant from the government Transformation Fund to work with neighbouring authorities on issues around Domestic Abuse. Luton Borough Council has contributed further to the project. A consultant with expertise on Domestic Abuse has been employed to work on a number of strands. These include:

- developing a pathway for Children where Domestic Abuse is a family issue, to ensure that we are intervening early enough;
- identifying additional early intervention programmes to offer for people caught in a cycle of Domestic Abuse and to prevent the intergenerational cycle of Domestic Abuse; and

- carrying out research of available material on why many women become involved in serial abusive relationships.

Recommendation 1(pathway development) and 9.

17. **Co-ordinator for Children impacted by Domestic Abuse**

A post within the Early Intervention Service has been developed to:

- co-ordinate and further develop training and awareness raising;
- working closely with schools and other professionals in identifying and supporting families with Domestic Abuse;
- manage the Relay Project and develop it further;
- ensure suitable and adequate programmes such as ‘Freedom’, ‘Healthy Relationships’ and similar programmes are accessible for all those who need them; and
- ensure that Early Help Assessments are constantly reviewed in order to support commissioning decisions in the Domestic Abuse area.

Recommendations 1, 6, 7, 8, will form part of the work of this post holder.

18. **Work with Partners**

- Early Intervention staff have taken part in training new police recruits for the first time in May 2014, around aspects of Domestic Abuse. The feedback was very positive, and the police service has expressed an interest that not only will this continue for new recruits, but some additional training will be provided for serving officers. The Co-ordinator for Children impacted by Domestic Abuse will lead on co-ordinating further training to a range of front-line professionals.
- The LSCB has made Domestic Abuse one of its 4 priorities in the year ahead.

Recommendation 3 and (i).

19. **Healthy Relationships**

Further courses of the “Healthy Relationship” programme are being rolled out and work will be undertaken with schools to recognise the value of this and similar early intervention programmes.

Recommendation 5

Conclusions

20.
 - The Executive is asked to welcome the work of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny and consider the report of the meeting held 25 February 2014.
 - Agree that the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be considered as part of the wider corporate review.