

DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY

PURPOSE

1. To provide the Board with an update on the Council's response to domestic abuse through progress on the development of a Domestic Abuse Strategy for Central Bedfordshire Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. That the Board note the information provided in the report.

PUBLIC/EXEMPT: Public

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BACKGROUND

3. Central Bedfordshire Council is a key partner in supporting victims of domestic abuse in Central Bedfordshire. Domestic abuse is cross-cutting in that it can affect anyone, resulting in directorates across the Council providing services to support victims and their families.
4. To tackle domestic abuse effectively the Council must ensure that within the available resources our response to domestic abuse gives the outcomes that victims and their families need at the right time and those services are delivered in a co-ordinated, effective and efficient way.
5. To deliver the right outcomes the Council is clear that a multi-agency approach is essential. It is vital that the Council not only engages with service users, but also with partners across Central Bedfordshire and Bedfordshire who also provide support and services for the victims of domestic abuse and their families.
6. To support a multi-agency approach the Council understands the need to set out clearly how it will contribute to tackling domestic abuse, and to do that the Council is committed to developing and implementing a Council Domestic Abuse Strategy and action plan.
7. The developing strategy is set within the context of:
 - More than 25% of the adult British female population will experience domestic abuse (DA) in their lifetime.

- DA affects people at all levels of society, including middle class families (e.g. 5.5% of households earning £40k – £50k are likely to experience abuse in the last year).
 - Those living in rural areas are more likely to experience domestic abuse (8.7%).
 - An estimated 4,100 victims are currently experiencing DA in Central Bedfordshire (3,238 police incidents in the last 12 months and rising).
 - 1,100 of these are at high or medium risk – includes at risk of murder or serious harm.
 - Approximately 40% of cases reported to the police record children being present.
 - Two thirds of victims being supported in Central Bedfordshire have children living with them.
 - Within Central Bedfordshire there will be 350 children living with high risk domestic abuse and 300 with medium risk abuse visible to services currently.
8. The Council has engaged SafeLives, a national charity, to work with us on developing the strategy and action plan. Since SafeLives establishment 10 years ago they have led on transforming the response to domestic violence and abuse by providing practical, risk-led solutions.
9. The strategy is being developed in two stages. The first stage had an internal focus, working across Council directorates, to identify how best to progress a robust co-ordinated strategy for the Council, identifying key themes for development and providing proposals for work needed to develop those themes.
10. Stage two will build on the research and analysis from stage one, finalise the draft strategy and plan and deliver a multi agency partnership workshop to consult and test the Councils draft strategic objectives.
11. Stage one development was completed at the end of July, and the following themes have emerged:
- I. Leadership and governance
 - II. Data needs
 - III. Commissioning processes
 - IV. Care pathways for all levels of risk
 - V. Multi Agency Risk Assessment Referrals
 - VI. Provision for standard and medium risk victims
 - VII. Training

Central Bedfordshire Children's Trust
Trust Board meeting
Date 16 September 2015

12. The Council has begun implementation of a strategic Domestic Abuse Board, Chaired by the Director of Children's Services, to review and refine the stage one work further and work with SafeLives on planning and completing the stage two work which the Council anticipates being completed in early November 2015.
13. Further detail on this item is being considered by Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board.