

Committee: Overview & Scrutiny Commission

Date: 24th November 2015

Wards: All

Subject: Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Update

Lead officer: Yvette Stanley, Director of Children, Schools and Families

Lead members: Cllr Maxi Martin, Cabinet Member for Children's Services ; Cllr Edith Macaulay, Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities

Contact officer: Zoe Gallen, Lead for Domestic Violence and MARAC

Recommendations:

- A. That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission discuss and comment on the work that has been carried out in relation to Violence Against Women and Girls
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report is to give an overview of the work that has been carried out with regards to Violence Against Women and Girls

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. The Council has a number of statutory duties relating to tackling and effectively responding to domestic abuse and violence against women and girls, duties which are delivered across a number of departments and in partnership with a range of partners.
- 2.2. At a partnership level the overarching strategy has been led by Safer Merton Partnership who have the lead on prevention, prosecution, overseeing and performance managing the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and commissioning any Domestic Homicide Reviews agreed by the partnership including reporting to the Home Office on such matters. The MSCB has statutory oversight of a range of related issues including child sexual exploitation, girls and gangs and the safeguarding aspects of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). The Health and Well Being Board also have an interest due to their leadership of our overall Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- 2.3. In terms of service responses, CSF department provides a broad range of services from safeguarding and child protection to work with schools around young peoples' wellbeing which prevent or respond to domestic violence and violence against women and girls. Community and Housing commission our local Refuges and have a role in relation to vulnerable adults who experience abuse including domestic violence. Safer Merton have historically led the strategic needs analysis process, commission the IDVA Service, administer the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), oversee any Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) process and

support the overall strategic response including governance of the strategy overall and supporting work groups such as the practitioners forum.

- 2.4. Given the need to have an up to date strategy and response to DV encompassing the various partnerships and roles of specific service departments the Director of E&R and Director of CSF agreed that an up to date needs assessments should be commissioned and officers from both service departments and the Public Health Team specified and commissioned a new needs assessment. The assessment was undertaken by Cordis Bright during spring and summer 2014 and they have now presented their findings to workshop involving key partners.

3 KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Domestic violence has been highlighted by the Coalition Government and by the Mayor of London as an area that increasingly demands focus and attention from a multi- agency partnership approach. It is also a priority issue for the council and our Health and Wellbeing Board, Safeguarding Children's Board and the Safer Merton partnership (the crime and disorder partnership).
- 3.2 Domestic abuse is in particular a key feature of the work of the CSF departments as DVIs one of the "toxic trio" featuring in the majority (60%+) of child protection cases and we have strong a track record of working with partners tackling domestic violence within families. However, in relationships where children are not present there are limited identified resources to support the victims of abuse and the review has established that the partnership's response to this small but important group is limited and less coherent than the current response to families.
- 3.3 The review also noted that Merton's population has been changing rapidly over time. 35% of our adult population are BME but 55% of our child population are BME. The fastest growing populations are the overall Asian population, which grew by 6% between 2000 and 2011, specifically those with Pakistani ethnicity which increased by 1.3% and Other Asian ethnicity which increased by 4.4%. The overall Black population grew by 3% over the same time period, with the Black African population growing by 1.8% any future service commissioning needs to respond to these changing profiles.
- 3.4 The review also looked at services available to victims of domestic abuse that are not commissioned directly by the council and are either funded by external agencies (HO and LGA) or are direct provision from the voluntary sector.
- 3.5 The full needs assessment covers some 170 pages but is available through the attached link. The Executive Summary is attached as appendix 1 and this report focuses on the 6 specific recommendations arising from the review.

4 WORK THAT HAS BEEN UNDERTAKEN

- 4.1 There is a new structure in place for VAWG, with the new VAWG strategic board that is overseeing the work around Violence against women and girls. Within this structure a new Practitioners group and commissioners group have been set up.
- 4.2 The VAWG strategic board has met 3 times and to date achieved:
- * Reviewed data and performance not just for domestic violence but also for the other forms of violence.
 - * The board has used the recommendations from the needs assessment and now have an action plan of work.
 - * Reviewed the work around MARAC and its performance.
 - * The board has started the work of the new VAWG strategy.
 - * Reviewed the service on borough.
 - * Looked at the communications not just for domestic violence but also for other forms of violence.
- 4.3 The VAWG practitioners group has met 3 times and the group have look at what services on borough provide support for not just domestic violence victims but victims of other violence. The group have also invited services from outside the borough to join them in providing services to victims.
- The group has also looked at a new action plan of work for them for the next 12 months and one of the main priorities for them was training and communications to the public about services available. One agency has bid for MOPAC money to help provide professional and public training.
- 4.4 The VAWG commissioners group has met once but is a virtual group of key people in the commissioning world. There has been agreement to look at the refuge service and support with the new VAWG strategy.

5 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. The Council and partners will find the most cost effective ways of delivering these functions

6 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The Council and Partners have a range of statutory functions relating to the services detailed in this report. The new arrangements are intended to strengthen our oversight of the delivery of these duties.

7 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS STRATEGY

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