

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Date: 25 November 2014

Wards: **All**

Subject: Domestic Violence needs assessment and way forward

Lead officer: Chris Lee

Lead member: Cllr Maxi Martin; Cllr Edith Macauley

Contact officer: Chris Lee, Director of Environment & Regeneration/ Yvette Stanley ,
Director of Children Schools and Families

Recommendations:

- A. That Members discuss the findings of the Domestic Violence Strategic Needs Assessment and make comments as they wish.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. To present the findings of the domestic violence strategic needs assessment and note Merton's response to the specific recommendations arising from the needs assessment.

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 the 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 Merton Safeguarding Children Board] MSCB has statutory oversight of a range of related issues including child sexual exploitation, girls and gangs and the safeguarding aspects of FGM [female genital mutilation]. 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 MARAC, oversee any 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. The Director of E&R is currently finalising proposals to locate specific areas of Safer Merton's work into other services/departments as part of the transformation plans and the impact of these changes will need to be built into our future arrangements. An update will be provided to the meeting verbally.
- 2.5. 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. The next section of the report summarises their key findings and recommendations

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 DV is 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.

Recommendation 1

Agree a common definition for domestic violence and abuse, which should be applied across all future strategic and operational activity in the borough

Response

That Merton in future has a Violence Against Women and Girl's Strategy incorporating domestic violence but encompassing:

Domestic Violence (including men, same sex relationships, and people with and without children)

Rape and Sexual Violence

Female Genital Mutilation

Forced Marriage

Crimes in the name of "honour"

Sexual Harassment

Stalking

Trafficking

Prostitution and Sexual Exploitation of adults

Children and Young People at risk of Sexual exploitation

We will need to identify lead agencies and officers for each strand.

Recommendation 2

Put in place strong leadership and governance arrangements surrounding the Domestic Violence, Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls agenda

With this in mind the Director CSF has agreed to be the CMT lead and to chair a new governance board. As part of the consultation on future arrangements for Safer Merton functions CMT will need to consider how the strategic and partnership support for this area is supported and to have clarity re each department's contributions.

Draft structures and terms of reference for the board are attached as appendices 2 and 3

Recommendations 3 and 5

The governance arrangements will oversee the development of an outcome-focussed strategy, to be developed and delivered by a partnership group. Clarify and implement strong performance management arrangements

Response

It is recommended that the new board oversees the development of a performance framework as part of its new role.

Recommendation 4

Develop an outcome focussed evidence-led commissioning plan to ensure the strategy is delivered

Response

The board will be supported by a working group of commissioners from PH, CSF, C&H and partners whose task will be to ensure we have a joined up commissioning response to this agenda.

Recommendation 6

Clarify, articulate and publicise arrangements for identifying victim/survivors, assessing risk and referring

Response

The board will be supported by a practitioners forum which will respond to this recommendation and make recommendations to strengthen our risk assessment and response

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1 The work started on borough in March 2014 and was finished early September. The work started with stakeholder interviews, reviewing strategies on borough and nationally. In June there was a stakeholder's workshop to review the recommendations proposed by Cordis Bright was held.

This paper to CMT is also part of the consultation for the changes. The findings and officers recommended response will need to go through our partnership infrastructure.

5 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

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

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 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

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

- 1.1 Cordis Bright Executive Summary and recommendations
- 1.2 draft proposed structure chart under the new governance
- 1.3 draft terms of reference for the new VAWG strategic board

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9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

CORDIS BRIGHT NEEDS ANALYSIS SEPT 2014

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