

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board  
**DATE:** 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011  
**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Adults & Community  
**SUBJECT:** Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy  
**WARD(S)** Borough-wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To inform the Executive Board of the revised Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION:**

**That Members of the Executive Board:**

- i) **Note and comment on the strategy;**
- ii) **Implementation of the strategy is endorsed as the areas multi agency approach to addressing Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.**

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 The Halton Domestic Abuse Forum (HDAF) was established in 2003 to develop a multi agency partnership approach to addressing the issue of Domestic Abuse. This was in line with the best practice Home Office developed Coordinated Community Response Model for approaching Domestic Abuse. In order to efficiently direct the groups focus a strategy was drafted for the period of 2005-2008 with the following objectives:

- Raise awareness of the issue of domestic abuse in Halton to engage the diverse community and improve victim reporting through campaigns and training;
- Raise awareness and develop services available in the area to increase retention of clients, to create a single point of contact for easier access and to respond to the needs of victims of sexual abuse and of children and young people;
- Improve the criminal justice procedure for victims to increase successful reporting and prosecution;
- Identify gaps in services and response to ensure they are filled particularly around housing needs, and health service and school involvement.

3.2 The outcomes from this strategy and Forum approach have been:

- Development and piloting of a local Specialist Domestic Violence Court (SDVC);
- Re commissioning of a Domestic Abuse Service to move towards a one stop shop, including best practice Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs);
- Commissioning of an Independent Sexual Violence Advocate (ISVA);
- Piloting and introduction of the Community Domestic Violence Programme by Cheshire Probation;
- Development of a Sanctuary Scheme to ensure victims are safe within their homes;
- Development of a local survivors group;
- Development of the local Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) processes;
- Consistent awareness campaigns;
- Development of Multi Agency Training Schedule.

Underlying these accomplishments has been the development of a multi agency performance management framework to ensure progress and issues within this area could be identified.

3.3 The HDAF has now developed a refreshed Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy for the period 2011-2014 and is attached at Appendix 1. This strategy is the product of a comprehensive review of local and national policy context across a multi agency arena. It has adopted the focuses being echoed in central government reviews of Prevention, Provision, Protection and Partnership working. It aims to build on the progress achieved to date and highlight future focuses to be addressed. The main areas for development identified to date include:

- Maintain effective multi agency participation in HDAF.
- Develop awareness strategy to achieve greater engagement of specific elements of the community, such as local employers.
- Continued analysis and response to emerging central government focuses.
- To secure funding streams for existing and developing services.
- Targeted agency training e.g. GP's and Team Around the Family
- To improve current data quality and range to better demonstrate local need across emerging focuses, such as Violence Against Women and Girls and BME communities.
- To ensure Survivor voices continue to be supported and inform local approaches.

The strategy outlines the specific actions involved in the achievement of these areas for development and has been

designed to ensure flexibility in response to the forthcoming action plans central government have announced.

#### 4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 This strategy has reviewed national policy to identify the likely local policy implications for this area. Thus, the strategy identifies the current focuses of central government alongside local strategic focuses to identify an action plan that can respond to local and national drivers.

4.2 For example, the Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls (CEVAWG) Strategy was launched by central government in November 2010 outlining their focus on the issue of violence disproportionately affecting women and girls. This includes both domestic abuse and sexual violence and places focus on the continued central government support of, amongst other things, IDVAs, ISVAs, and MARACs. These ongoing focuses have been incorporated into the strategy to ensure the ongoing work of the HDAF will be in line with this approach. This can be evidenced in Chapter 8 of the strategy.

4.3 Similarly, prior to completion a proposed model for excellence has been developed around Domestic Abuse Partnerships. This strategy has adopted the proposed excellence model as a template for the action plan to ensure that the HDAF can effectively monitor itself against this proposed model.

4.4 Alongside the strategy development the result of this project has been to draw together a range of data available in relation to Domestic and Sexual Abuse. This needs analysis has allowed for the development of a clear picture of need for Domestic and Sexual Abuse to underpin the action plan identified above, some of the key areas highlighted were:

- **Sexual Offences:** The most prolific sexual offence in Halton is the sexual assault of a female aged 13 or over. This highlights a priority area in terms of young teen awareness and protection.
- **Influencing Factors:** Within Domestic Abuse Incidents the prevalence of alcohol as a contributing factor increases to a third (33%) of incidents.
- **Diversity:** The North West has the second highest incidence of forced marriage in the whole of the UK. 17% of cases in 2009 were reported in the North West. However there is a lack of Halton specific data available. Similarly, 1 in 3 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people experience domestic abuse. However within HDAF it is acknowledged that the LGBT community is not adequately represented or catered for.
- **Protection:** For all domestic incidents the arrest rate appears fairly low at 17.2%.

- **Early Intervention:** The peak in CYP missing from home would seem to correlate with the school summer holidays which may be an area to explore further, at a later date, in terms of correlation with domestic abuse incident peaks.
- **Impact on Children's Social Care:** During 2009-10 over half the referrals made by the police to Children's Social Care in Halton related to Domestic Abuse. In January 2010, 59% of children subject to child protection plans were deemed to be at risk from Domestic Abuse.

4.5 A similar report was presented to the Safer Policy & Performance Board on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2011 who supported the strategic approach.

## 5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Funding has been secured until March 2012 for the continuation of the approaches mapped out within the strategy. During the 2011/12 Financial Year work will be undertaken to identify where long term sustainable funding can be sourced to ensure this strategy can continue to be implemented.

5.2 Areas of development identified within the strategy will, in some cases, carry additional cost elements. It will be the function of the HDAF to identify potential funding streams for this work.

## 6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### 6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

This strategy aims to support robust safeguarding children arrangements through identification of children living within domestically abuse environments and safety plans implemented to enable parents to provide a safer environment.

### 6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

None identified.

### 6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

This strategy supports the delivery of services that address health inequalities through supporting those socially excluded to access support to improve their general health and well being.

### 6.4 **A Safer Halton**

The strategy ensures monitoring and commissioning in line with local need to enable victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence to reduce risk and improve their safety.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The production of this strategy aims to reduce risks associated with this area through ensuring that approaches fit with local need and best practice models. For example, provision of an IDVA service for High risk victims to reduce repeat incidents of domestic abuse to those most at risk of significant harm.

7.2 The strategy and current implementation structure also ensures that there is a checking process in place to monitor performance and operational issues in this field. Essentially confirming that we are able to identify and respond to issues quickly and effectively.

7.3 Whilst a comprehensive data review and analysis has been undertaken parts of the review highlighted some data quality and gap issues. It is imperative that these are addressed swiftly to ensure we have accurate and full pictures of need across a range of diverse areas.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 This strategy has, and through revised reporting formats, will continue to monitor the impact of actions and commissioning on the diverse range of need represented within the local community.

9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Halton Domestic Abuse Forum Strategy 2005-2008	Municipal Building	Sarah Ashcroft Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator Runcorn Town Hall