

REPORT TO:	Safer Policy and Performance Board
DATE:	17 January 2012
REPORTING OFFICER:	Strategic Director, Communities
PORTFOLIO:	Health and Adults
SUBJECT:	Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence
WARDS:	All

1.	PURPOSE OF REPORT
1.1	To update the Safer Policy and Performance Board in relation to the activities being supported across the Borough in response to domestic abuse and sexual violence.
2.	RECOMMENDATION: That the Board consider and comment on the report.
3.	SUPPORTING INFORMATION
3.1	Domestic violence is a serious and high-volume crime. It is a pattern of controlling and abusive behavior, held together by the threat and use of violence. Domestic violence is widespread, approximately every minute in England and Wales, the police receive a call for assistance. One in four women has experience domestic violence and one in six men.
3.2	Domestic violence kills. At least two women are murdered in the UK by their current or former partner every week. The estimated cost of domestic violence in England and Wales in 2008 was £18 billion.
3.3	In Cheshire there have been three homicides from 1st December 2009 to 30th November 2011 where the circumstances have been recorded as domestic violence; 2 female victims and 1 male.
3.4	Partnerships should always work to ensure that domestic violence is recognised as a social ill (and that it has a direct link to broader issues such as child protection and gender inequality and not just to crime reduction). In difficult financial times, reducing domestic violence is both socially and economically beneficial. <i>Standing Together Against Domestic Violence – In search of Excellence; A guide to effective Domestic Violence Partnerships.</i>
3.5	Halton Domestic Abuse Forum (HDAF) Strategic Group was established to provide overall direction, control management and guidance for the response to Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence within Halton. It act as a multi-agency partnership board of lead officers and key representatives, which takes strategic decisions aimed at tackling domestic abuse and

	<p>sexual violence in their widest forms and provide support to all victims within our area. The Forum is responsible for determining and implementing policy, coordinating activity between agencies, and facilitating training. It evaluates the responses we have locally for victims, children living in households where domestic violence is a feature and to consider provision for perpetrators. The Forum promotes inter-agency cooperation, to encourage and help develop effective working relationships between different services and agencies, based on mutual understanding and trust. In order to develop and sustain a high level of commitment to the protection of victims of domestic abuse and affected children and young people.</p>
3.6	<p>Halton Survivors of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Conference in support of 'The White Ribbon Campaign',</p> <p>The purpose of the conference was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a snapshot insight to the impact of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence on Children, Families and Individuals • To understand the shared vision for tackling Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence • To ensure that professionals are able to recognise the extent of Domestic and Sexual Violence and can make appropriate referrals to support services • To raise awareness of the importance for a cross agency approach in supporting children, families and individuals experiencing Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence • To provide a platform for survivors of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence to share their experiences <p>The conference was opened by Derek Twigg MP and closed by Cllr Shaun Osborne. It was organised by the Halton Survivors Forum who have been supported by the Halton Domestic Abuse Forum as we have sought to strengthen the voice of the survivor in local service provision.</p> <p>The event was supported by Cronton Sixth form college performing arts students, a choir from a local primary school and the Valhalla Foundation's Vikings Against Bullying campaign.</p> <p>Cronton Sixth Form college performing arts students have been very supportive of the agenda and have been raising the issue of domestic abuse with its students. More than 120 local young people have received the performance and information relating to domestic abuse support services. Raising awareness particularly with younger victims and perpetrators is a key theme identified as a trend at our local Halton Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and is a key objective of the HDAF Strategic Group.</p>

	The event was a resounding success and was extremely well received, and enjoyed local press coverage.
3.7	The HDAF Strategic group members have completed the Audit Commissions Self Assessment on local area response to domestic abuse. The findings of this piece of work have overall been extremely positive and have highlighted several areas of local good practice. Notably Halton's commitment and culture to support joint work, well-established and efficient partnership arrangements, priorities and strategies for development and improvement. The report summarises that Halton has an active approach to preventing future abuse and reducing risks to victims and involves victims and survivors in service improvement. The HDAF Strategic Group has agreed to devise and develop an action plan to address the areas of development identified within the self-assessment tool to improve Halton's response to Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence. This action plan will be both monitored and driven within the remit of the Strategic Group.
3.8	The Internet site has been revised alongside current government guidelines for appropriate content. A revised Universal Resource Locator (URL) has been devised for promotional materials to allow clear promotion to the local community of this information source. The site now includes a professional's page allowing staff from partner agencies to access relevant documents and information pertaining to Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence that were previously on available to Halton Borough Council employed staff.
3.9	<p>Halton Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) has a current rolling NI 32 performance level of 26%. 65 cases were discussed in quarter 2 compared to last years figure of 29 with 20 repeats seen this quarter compared to 9 in Q2 last year.</p> <p>Cheshire Constabulary Halton Police Public Protection Unit (PPU) team felt that the introduction of the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment and 'Honour Based Violence' (DASH) Risk assessment brought about a substantial increase in the number of cases brought to the attention of MARAC when it was introduced in the last quarter of 2010. In response to this, some cases put forward as HIGH risk (as defined in the DASH guidance) were reviewed and re-classified leading to some cases being removed from the MARAC agenda. As a consequence MARAC meetings from April 2010 onwards more or less halved as Halton Police Public Protection Unit (PPU) felt this revised process enabled them to concentrate on the high risk cases that they felt warranted detailed discussion.</p> <p>Cheshire Police Strategic PPU and Halton Domestic Abuse Forum identified that a lower than anticipated number of cases were appearing at Halton MARAC and did not reflect the guidance provided by Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA), as a consequence all high risk cases are now discussed at MARAC accounting for the significant increase in the number of cases now being discussed at MARAC and the increase in repeats.</p>

3.10	235 incidents of domestic abuse have been reported to Cheshire Constabulary during this quarter; during the same period of 2010-11 230 incidents were reported indicating a slight decrease in the number of domestic abuse incidents being reported to Cheshire Police.
3.11	The Crown Prosecution Service; Pre charge cases at 129 are down by 28% on the same period last year (180) and the number of defendants (57) is down on Q2 last year (133) by 57%. Successful prosecutions at 72% are considerably better than the 64% recorded in the same period last year.
4.	POLICY IMPLICATIONS
4.1	Halton Sanctuary Scheme Policy, Procedure and Practice had been developed.
5.0	IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCILS PRIORITIES
5.1	<p>A Healthy Halton</p> <p>To remove barriers that disable people and contribute to poor health by working across partnership to address the wider determinants of health such as unemployment, education and skills, housing, crime and environment.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preventable cause of death 2. Preventable cause of infant mortality 3. Preventable cause of mental health 4. Preventable cases presenting at A & E
5.2	<p>Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton</p> <p>Domestic abuse has a detrimental impact on employment. Among employed women who suffered domestic abuse in the last year 21% took time off work and a further 2% lost their jobs (Walby and Allen 2004)</p> <p>To maximise an individuals potential to increase and manage their income and manage their income, including access to appropriate, supportive advice services assisting victims to develop better financial management skills and to address debt through appropriate sign posting.</p>
5.3	<p>Children and Young People in Halton</p> <p>Children and young people in Halton are emotionally, physically and sexually healthy and Children and young people will feel safe at home, in school and in their communities. For example, ensuring homes are healthy safe environments through offering support to parents and providing access for aftercare support for victims of sexual violence whether a child or young person.</p>

5.4	A Safer Halton To understand and tackle the problem of domestic abuse in all its forms. For example, through ensuring adult victims have access to protective and supportive measures reduces the level of domestic incidents and the subsequent impact on the environment with regards to crime and ASB.
6.0	RISK ANALYSIS
	These are contained within the report.
7.0	FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS
	WNF will cease on the 31 st March 2012. Options for alternative ways of providing services and funding existing services are being explored.
8.0	EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES
8.1	An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and registered, specifically for the Halton Domestic Abuse Forum Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy.
8.2	The promotion of equal opportunities between women and men requires public authorities to recognise that the two groups are not starting from an equal footing and identical treatment will not always be appropriate, as such Halton BC should be mindful of its duty whilst reviewing service provision to ensure that any future decisions do not give rise to an enquiry by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.
8.3	Single sex services are lawful where there is a clear need to preserve decency or privacy, such as a women's refuge. However, this is a complex area of law with a number of exemptions. Single sex service provision is not changed by the gender duty, and the duty does not mean that single sex services should be cut, or that services should necessarily be provided on the same scale for both men and women. For example, because women make up the majority of victims of domestic violence and rape it is not be appropriate for a local council to fund or provide refuge services on an equal basis for men and for women.
9.0	LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972
	None under the meaning of the Act.