

REPORT TO:	Safer Policy and Performance Board
DATE:	13 th March 2012
REPORTING OFFICER:	Strategic Director, Communities
PORTFOLIO:	Health & Adults and Community Safety
SUBJECT:	Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence
WARDS:	All

1.	PURPOSE OF REPORT
1.1	To update the Safer Halton 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 members of the Board: i) Consider and comment on any of the content of the report.
3.	SUPPORTING INFORMATION
3.1	The Halton Domestic Abuse Forum consists of four key groups. These are: The Strategic Group; The Operational Group; The Service User Group and the MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference). The MARAC is a forum where professionals discuss referrals relating to Domestic Violent incidents, the multi-agency group agrees strategies to address each circumstance. Together these groups make up the Halton Domestic Abuse Forum and address the following: Provides strategic guidance and tactical expertise to any other relevant groups within the domestic abuse remit; Devises, develops and implements action plans to provide/maintain sufficient effective and accessible support mechanisms for all parties involved in domestic abuse; Devises standards and performance indicators and builds a specific evaluation process into each development; Raises awareness of domestic abuse and related issues and aims to increase the reporting of such incidents, establishing their true scale in Halton; Liaises with other relevant bodies keeps up to date on national and international domestic abuse related initiatives and trends; Promotes appropriate training amongst key partner agencies; Consults with users to ascertain feedback on services and strives to develop and deliver high quality services that are centred and address local need.
3.2	Halton Survivors Group is a mixed group of survivors of both domestic abuse and/ or sexual violence consisting of both male and female victims. The purpose of the Halton Survivors Group is - To establish a strong working relationship with service providers within the Halton area; to

	highlight and promote good practice; to identify areas for development in maintaining a high level of accessible support for both men and women experiencing Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence; to raise and maintain a high level of awareness and understanding of the impact of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence on children, families and individuals; to provide a voice for service users accessing Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence services to help develop policies and enhance service provision.
3.3	Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence are issues that affect young people. Ensuring that young people are able to identify abuse and have the knowledge and information available to them to enable them to make and identify healthy relationships is central to raising expectations both in males and females. Cronton 6 th Form College delivered a Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence awareness raising event to 125 young people who attend Cronton College and circulated marketing information with local service provision access material. Cronton College have expressed a willingness to continue to work with and support the Halton Domestic Abuse Forum.
3.4	Domestic Abuse the effect on children and the impact on parenting workshop session was delivered with staff from Halton PCT (Primary Care Trust). The purpose of this was to encourage frontline practitioners to explore the impact of domestic abuse on children, how symptoms of domestic abuse in the home can manifest in children's behaviour, achievements, outcomes and health; to discuss compromised parenting and look at protective factors.
3.5	Providing bespoke workshops at partner agency events and conferences is part of the Halton Domestic Abuse Forums agenda to embed domestic abuse awareness across all agencies. Ensuring multi-agency staff are confident and equipped to raise the issue of domestic abuse with the service users they work with and care for.
3.6	In Halton, the Youth Offending Team recognises the importance of addressing domestic abuse and the wider implications associated with domestic abuse. They have two members of staff who can offer young offenders who are assessed and identified as being eligible to receive domestic abuse perpetrator focused work, staff are trained and accredited to work with perpetrators in this setting.
3.7	Halton & Warrington have carried out an audit looking at a sample of cases where domestic abuse and/or sexual violence have been identified as an issue in the core assessment. This was completed in conjunction with the Halton Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Coordinator. This audit identified a number of themes and common issues within cases which will inform further action and measures to address domestic abuse and sexual violence.
3.8	During the first three quarters of 2011-12, performance has improved, with MARAC having supported a total of 175 cases.

3.9	Specialist Domestic Violence Court has reported that 81% of cases had successful court outcomes, the same as quarter 3 last year. 42 cases were seen compared with 21 in quarter 3 last year.
3.10	Safe Place Project has been to set up a SARC (Sexual Assault Referral Centre) for Cheshire, Halton and Warrington. SARCs are a national initiative and care for people who have suffered rape or serious sexual assault and provides forensic medical examination, care and aftercare. They therefore have close links with domestic violence.
3.10.1	St Marys in Manchester was the first SARC in the country; they began offering a service for children 5 years ago. They now see 450+ children a year. The contract to provide SARC services across the 4 Cheshire LSCB (Local Safeguarding Children Board) areas began in April 2011.
3.10.2	Activity and performance is reported to the Cheshire SARC Management Board. The Management Board is comprised of local partners. Positive feedback on the service has been received from those accessing the service from across Cheshire. However, there are concerns as to how aware staff are of the services provided by the SARC as there have been no referrals regarding pre-pubertal children from Cheshire.
3.10.3	Following disclosure either the police or Children's Social Care should telephone the SARC. A decision will be made as to whether the child needs to be seen acutely or not, depending on what is in their best interests. Non-acute cases will be offered an appointment at the children's clinic. The Child Advocate will contact the child and family beforehand in preparation for the appointment. The Lead Professional should fax a referral form to the SARC to ensure staff have all relevant details. A Police Officer or Social Worker is expected to accompany the child. A Crisis Worker will see the child, familiarise them with the examination room, and focus upon them; a doctor will complete a child health assessment.
3.10.4	Referrals of children over 13 years of age go to RASASC (Rape and Sexual Assault Support Centre). RASASC and the SARC work in partnership. The safeguarding responsibility sits with the SARC who will ensure that RASASC follow up.
3.10.5	In order to overcome any cultural assumptions by practitioners of the work of the SARC, awareness raising sessions for staff across Cheshire have been arranged.
4.	POLICY IMPLICATIONS
4.1	The main policy areas are contained within the report.
5.0	IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCILS PRIORITIES
5.1	A Healthy Halton

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. Examples:

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>To maximise an individuals potential to increase and manage their income and mange 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	<p>A Safer Halton</p> <p>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.</p>
6.0	<p>RISK ANALYSIS</p>
	<p>These are contained within the report.</p>
7.0	<p>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</p>
7.1	<p>WNF (Working Neighbourhood Fund) will cease on the 31st March 2012. Options for alternative ways of providing services and funding existing services are being explored.</p>
8.0	<p>EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES</p>
8.1	<p>A forced marriage is where one or both parties to the marriage do not consent. Forced marriage is a form of violence against women and raises concerns related to a number of human rights including the right to enter</p>

	into marriage only with free and full consent, the right to bodily and sexual integrity and the right to non-discrimination and equal protection in law. Rape is often a consequence of forced marriage.
8.2	There is currently no specific criminal offence of 'forced marriage.' The Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007 provides a specific civil remedy – a Forced Marriage Protection Order – to prevent victims being forced into a marriage and to assist victims where a marriage has already taken place. In addition, many of the key behaviours typically associated with a forced marriage are already covered by existing criminal offences, for example: kidnapping, false imprisonment, harassment and assault.
8.3	The Government is consulting on whether a specific criminal offence of 'forced marriage' would help to combat forced marriage and provide better protection to victims. The government has already indicated that it intends to strengthen protection to victims by criminalising the breach of a FMPO Forced Marriage Protection Order. The consultation will seek views on how this can most effectively be achieved, close 30 th March 2012.
8.4	Currently it is not a criminal offence to breach an FMPO. A power of arrest may be attached to any section of the FMPO. Making breach of a FMPO a criminal offence will bring it in line with non-molestation orders under the Family Law Act 1996 and restraining orders under the Protection of Harassment Act 1997, a breach of which is a criminal offence.
8.5	It is important not to confuse a forced marriage, with an arranged marriage. Forced marriages exist where there is no free consent of both parties.
9.0	LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972
	None under the meaning of the Act.