

North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership - Executive

25 June 2009

Domestic abuse: strategic planning and delivery components

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To inform the NYSP Executive about the strategic planning and delivery components in place across the County in relation to domestic abuse, and to highlight areas for improvement.

2 Background

- 2.1 At its meeting of 30 April 2009 the NYSP Executive agreed to take a strategic lead in prioritising and raising the profile of domestic abuse prevention in North Yorkshire. This was, in part, prompted by a report on young people affected by domestic abuse which was produced by North Yorkshire County Council's Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This report recommended that there is a need to 'champion' the issue at a strategic, multi-agency level and to drive work forward on a time limited basis.
- 2.2 The Executive requested a further report giving more detail on the strategic planning and delivery components that are currently in place and to highlight areas where improvements could be made.

3 Strategic planning and delivery of domestic abuse prevention in North Yorkshire

- 3.1 The following components of planning and delivery are considered:
- Data collection
 - Policies and procedures
 - Co-ordination
 - Information sharing and joint decision making
 - Partnership working
 - Services
 - Monitoring and review
- 3.2 **Data collection**
- 3.2.1 Relevant data is currently collected through the Police and Supporting People. Police data includes incident data and repeat incidents. Supporting People data relates to homelessness presentation as a result of domestic violence and the origin of those using refuges in the county.
- 3.2.2 Access to certain data can be difficult for practitioners and Coordinators who are not employed by the police and there may be capacity issues with one individual doing it for everyone across the county.

3.3 Policies and procedures

- 3.3.1 The overall strategic direction for domestic abuse prevention work is contained in the York and North Yorkshire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2009-11 which defines domestic abuse and provides information about its prevalence in a national and local context. The strategy is currently subject to consultation. The need to work together to tackle domestic abuse is also highlighted in the Sustainable Community Strategy for North Yorkshire 2008/18 and both the Homelessness Strategy and the Supporting People Strategy make reference to the Domestic Abuse Strategy.
- 3.3.2 The Domestic Abuse Joint Coordinating Group (a sub-group of the Safer Communities Forum) has been set up to ensure delivery of the 2008/ 2011 North Yorkshire Domestic Abuse Strategy. The Joint Coordinating Group (JCG) has a membership of key stakeholders from both the voluntary and statutory sector and representatives are at a level where they are able to make decisions and commitments from their agencies. Membership of the JCG has increased recently and it is likely that the Safer Communities Forum (as part of a wider review of JCGs) will give consideration to ensuring that the JCG is more focussed and that the wider group of practitioners have access to appropriate information, support and networking.
- 3.3.3 Work is still needed to ensure full organisational sign-up to policies and procedures by individual agencies and employees. The JCG, through the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinators, is mapping consultation on, and sign-up to, the Domestic Abuse Strategy and will be monitoring this and reporting to the NYSF Executive on an ongoing basis.
- 3.3.4 Policies for providing support to employees who may be experiencing domestic abuse are also in differing stages of development. A pilot to develop a 'champions' scheme is being explored in Richmondshire and, if successful, could be used as a best practice model to share.

3.4 Co-ordination

- 3.4.1 Countywide co-ordination of strategic issues in relation to domestic abuse can be problematic. Four Domestic Abuse Co-ordinators are in post for Harrogate/Craven, Scarborough/Ryedale, Hambleton/Richmondshire and Selby/York, but all currently have different employing authorities, and slightly different job descriptions and grades. Together with the fragmented and ad-hoc funding arrangements which have been in place for these posts, this has led to uncertainty and difficulty in forward planning, together with staff retention and recruitment problems. Access to data can also be an issue for those Co-ordinators not employed by the Police.
- 3.4.2 These posts are vital for the rolling out of the Making Safe programme, and the Co-ordinators also have a key role in Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) and in meeting the objectives of the North Yorkshire and York Domestic Abuse Strategy through delivery in every district.
- 3.4.3 However, the Co-ordinators are currently not working as a countywide team under one employer with the associated resilience, co-ordination and consistency which that would bring. There are therefore limitations to the

effectiveness of the current system, which will not be resolved until funding issues and mainstreaming of the posts are addressed.

- 3.4.4 There is general agreement that the posts will be mainstreamed and employed by the Police (with existing staff transferred) subject to appropriate funding being secured. The County Council and the Police have already agreed to each pay one-third of the costs on an ongoing basis and the PCT are considering making a similar contribution. District councils would continue to provide office space and facilities within those provided for CDRP staff.

3.5 Information sharing and joint decision making processes

- 3.5.1 Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) are in place across the county. The role of a MARAC is to facilitate, monitor and evaluate effective information sharing to enable appropriate actions to be taken to increase public safety.
- 3.5.2 A review of MARACs in North Yorkshire is currently being carried out, including a benchmarking exercise against the Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA) best practice model. All partners have been involved in this process and the intention is to standardise procedures in line with current best practice, both nationally and locally.
- 3.5.3 North Yorkshire Police have recently merged their community protection, vulnerable persons, child protection and public protection units to form Protecting Vulnerable Persons Units (PVPs). There will be 4 of these units across the county – in Northallerton, Scarborough, York and Harrogate. Each of these units will have a dedicated Detective Inspector and it is intended that where possible, to build resilience and share intelligence, specialist skills will be shared across staff.
- 3.5.4 The Domestic Abuse Joint Co-ordinating Group (JCG) has an overview of work in relation to domestic abuse prevention and acts as a forum for information sharing. Strategy development and MARAC review have both been carried out through the JCG.

3.6 Partnership working

- 3.6.1 Partnership working is facilitated through the structures and processes which have already been mentioned. One important component of partnership working in North Yorkshire is Making Safe. This is a multi agency initiative supporting victims of domestic abuse to remain safe within their own homes at the same time as challenging the offender's behaviour.
- 3.6.2 Co-ordination of Making Safe is facilitated by the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinators and is therefore subject to the limitations mention at 3.4.3

3.7 Services

- 3.7.1 A wide range of specialist services is in place across the county in relation to support for victims, accommodation and work with perpetrators. More detail was given in a previous report to the Executive.

3.7.2 These services are made available by a range of providers, often in the independent sector, and there would be considerable added value in ensuring better co-ordination, as detailed in 3.4.3

3.8 Monitoring and review

3.8.1 Monitoring of the strategy action plan is carried out through the Domestic Abuse JCG and the Safer Communities Forum.

3.8.2 Within the Local Area Agreement (LAA2) there is also a target to reduce repeat incidents of domestic violence by 7% (indicator NI 32). A proxy baseline figure, based on Scarborough and Selby returns is currently being used but a more robust baseline will be used once all MARACs across the county are sufficiently established.

3.8.3 Currently Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) are also carried out when a child lies and abuse or neglect is known to be, or suspected to be, a factor in the death.

3.8.4 The purposes of SCRs are to establish whether there are lessons to be learned from the case about the way in which local professionals and agencies work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, to identify clearly what those lessons are, how they will be acted on, and what is expected to change as a result, and, consequentially, improve inter-agency working and better safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

3.8.5 Section 9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 gave local bodies the power to establish homicide reviews for victims of domestic violence. This brings the procedure into line with current practice for serious case reviews. There is no statutory requirement to carry out homicide reviews and they are not currently carried out in North Yorkshire. However there may be an argument for establishing such reviews where they do not replicate current arrangements. Guidance as to the lead agency in such reviews is far from clear but it is felt that an independent agency would be best placed to ensure an impartial report

3.8.6 This would be an appropriate time to trial homicide reviews as there has been a recent murder in the area. Further work investigating potential costs and benefits could be progressed if the Executive consider it appropriate.

<h2>4 <u>Recommendations</u></h2>
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<p>4.1 The NYSP Executive considers the report and what further actions are required.</p>

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