



Milton Keynes Community Safety Partnership

Responsible Authorities Group (RAG) Decision Report

Subject: Milton Keynes Response to tackling Domestic Abuse

Reason for report

This report is submitted to recommend:

- A strategic lead is nominated from the Responsible Authorities Group to represent all matters involving domestic abuse.
- The Domestic and Sexual Violence Delivery Group formulate a strategic action plan to present to RAG to tackle the issues raised in the attached review of domestic abuse services.

Background

The attached review provides evidence for both of the recommendations made to RAG.

Between 2 and 4 July 2012, Anthony Wills the Chief Executive of *Standing Together against Domestic Violence*, a national charity, visited Milton Keynes on an application made by the Domestic and Sexual Violence Delivery Group to review whether we had an effective partnership approach. The charity had been provided monies from the HO to visit ten areas throughout the country. The organisation works to promote a co-ordinated, multi-agency community response to domestic violence; a specific approach that recognises that no one agency acting in isolation can tackle domestic violence effectively. Without effective coordination of activities between agencies, responses are less effective and survivors of domestic violence are still at risk of falling through the gaps in the system.

The visit entailed reviewing paperwork, interviewing delivery group members (Probation, Police, CRI, YOT, MK-Act, Safer MK, Adult Safeguard, Education) and a survivors' focus group at the MK-Act refuge. This visit was integral to the opportunities now available through Children and Family practices and work with the Government Troubled Families initiative.

The outcome for residents and communities in Milton Keynes should be based on being free from domestic abuse by all agencies working together increasing survivor safety, holding perpetrators to account, decreasing social tolerance and increasing people's ability to have healthy relationships. The Domestic and Sexual Violence Delivery Group can strive to work towards this but a strategic lead would have ownership and accountability and a form of empowerment over other agencies who almost subconsciously become a silo of work due to fiscal challenges.

Domestic abuse in Milton Keynes, as elsewhere, is widespread. It occurs across all communities, irrespective of poverty and deprivation, or a people's education, sexuality, ethnicity or ability. Originating from a sense of entitlement and rooted in patriarchal traditions, the vast majority of domestic abuse is experienced by women and perpetrated by men, and the gender of both victim and perpetrator influences the type of abuse used and severity of harm caused. If not prevented, domestic abuse often escalates in intensity and severity, and can lead to the victim's death. Nationally, two women a week are killed by a current or former partner. Factors that increase the risk of homicide include the gender of the victim and perpetrator; the presence of rape, stalking and controlling behaviour; the co-occurrence of child abuse; isolation and barriers to accessing services; separation, and child contact disputes.

Domestic violence causes significant health problems, including physical injury, self-harm, eating disorders, sexually transmitted infections, attempted suicide, depression, anxiety and other mental health problems. Women experiencing domestic violence are 15 times more likely to misuse alcohol and 9 times more likely to misuse drugs than non-abused women. Other consequences of domestic violence include poverty, unemployment and homelessness. Domestic violence impacts on employers and the local economy by limiting victims' ability to access education, training and employment; decreasing the productivity of employees, and increasing absenteeism and staff turnover.

Domestic violence harms children and young people. Three quarters of children living with domestic violence witness it and half are directly abused. Teenagers also experience domestic violence in their own relationships, which disproportionately affects girls, and there are links between domestic violence, youth offending and teenage pregnancy.

In Milton Keynes the individual, economic and social cost of domestic violence after it has occurred is astronomical. Domestic violence has a serious and lasting impact on a victim's sense of safety, health, wellbeing and autonomy, and can severely restrict victims' ability to fully participate in society.

Nationally, reducing and preventing domestic and sexual violence is a government priority which has cross-party support. Its prevention is recognised as being central to agendas on public health, reducing crime and the harm caused by serious violent crime, safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, promoting education, learning and skills development, and promoting equality. Government recognises the gendered pattern of violence against women and girls needs to be understood and acknowledged. The recognition that men and boys can be victims of violence and that it can affect whole families including children and work will include them, however men have a key role in challenging violence and helping to change the attitudes and actions of their peers. (HM Government, Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls, 2010).

Attachments

Annex: Standing Together Report “The coordinated Community Response to Domestic Violence” – Anthony Wills

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