

Lancashire County Council

Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Friday, 13th June, 2014 at 10.30 am in Cabinet Room 'B' - County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor Bill Winlow (Chair)

County Councillors

A Barnes	D O'Toole
D Clifford	J Shedwick
C Crompton	V Taylor
R Newman-Thompson	C Wakeford
Mrs L Oades	D Watts
	G Wilkins

County Councillor Darren Clifford replaced County Councillor Miles Parkinson for this meeting.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Scrutiny Committee: Chair and Deputy Chair, Membership, and Terms of Reference

A report was presented informing the Committee that at the County Council's annual meeting on 15 May 2014 it was agreed that the Scrutiny Committee should comprise 13 County Councillors (on the basis of 6 Labour members, 1 Liberal Democrat member, 5 Conservative members, and 1 Independent member). Nominations of County Councillors to serve on the Committee had been submitted to the County Secretary and Solicitor by the respective political groups.

The County Councillors appointed to serve on the Scrutiny Committee for the following year were:

Alyson Barnes	Carl Crompton
Richard Newman-Thompson	Liz Oades
David O'Toole	Miles Parkinson
Clare Pritchard	John Shedwick
Vivien Taylor	Christian Wakeford
David Watts	George Wilkins

Bill Winlow

The Full Council also appointed County Councillor B Winlow and County Councillor A Barnes as Chair and Deputy Chair of the Committee for the remainder of the 2014/15 municipal year

Resolved: That the Committee note:

1. The appointment of County Councillor B Winlow and County Councillor A Barnes as Chair and Deputy Chair of the Committee for the remainder of the municipal year;
2. The membership of the Committee following the County Council's annual meeting; and
3. The Terms of Reference of the Committee.

3. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Interests

None were disclosed.

4. Minutes of the Meetings held on the 9 May and 20 May 2014

County Councillor Crompton informed the Committee that he had attended the Scrutiny Committee on 9 May but his attendance had been omitted from the minutes.

It was noted that the minute of the meeting of the 20 May contained a typographical error on page 2 of the minutes. It was confirmed that it should read "the local County Councillor for the division had played no part in the decision."

Resolved: That, with the amendments noted above, the minutes of the meetings held on 9 and 20 May 2014 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

5. Partnership Response to Domestic Abuse

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Bob Stott, Director for Universal and Early Support Services; Helene Cooper, Community Safety and Justice Co-Ordinator; County Councillor Tony Martin, Cabinet Member for Adult and Community Services; Sakthi Karunanithi, Director of Public Health; Martin Hill, Head of Magistrates Prosecutions, Lancashire and Cumbria Crown Prosecution Service; and Assistant Chief Constable Tim Jacques.

A report was presented on the strong history of partnership working in relation to Domestic Abuse in Lancashire and the continued commitment in making it a safe place to live, work and visit. The key partners included Lancashire County

Council, district and unitary authorities, Lancashire Constabulary, Clinical Commissioning Groups, Lancashire Fire and Rescue, Lancashire Probation Services, wider criminal justice partners and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Lancashire Community Safety Strategy Group (LCSSG) brought together representatives of these organisations to set the strategic direction for coordinating partnership activity under a range of statutory duties, to reduce crime and re-offending, tackle anti-social behaviour and substance misuse.

Reducing the harm caused by domestic abuse was a key priority for LCSSG and was aligned across a range of strategic partnerships including the Lancashire Children and Young People's Trust and Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board.

A Domestic Abuse Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) had been developed which detailed the prevalence of domestic abuse in the county. This had been based on a substantial evidence gathering project, including service mapping, reviewing good practice, an assessment of resources available and extensive service user consultation.

There were 20,750 calls to police about domestic abuse between April 2013 and March 2014 in Lancashire. Burnley and Preston had the highest number of calls to the police about domestic abuse. Hyndburn, Lancaster and Pendle also had above county average numbers of calls. All had seen a reduction in calls over the last three years. 47% of the calls to the police about domestic abuse in 2013/14 related to households with at least one child.

Lancashire County Council children's social care received 4,995 referrals for domestic abuse from April 2013 to January 2014 which was less than half the number of referrals in the same period the previous year.

Between April 2013 and March 2014, 18% of attendees at accident and emergency departments in Lancashire for an assault, gave the assault location as being in the home.

There were 3028 high risk Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) that had taken place from April 2013 to March 2014 in Lancashire. This was an increase of 40% compared with April 2011 to March 2012. Increased awareness and workforce training had contributed to the increase. There were 3799 children in the households where MARACs took place. The rate of repeat had stayed fairly constant at around 23% over the last three years.

Between April 2013 and March 2014, Lancashire County Council's supporting people service provided 1050 services to people whose primary need was domestic abuse. Floating support, outreach services and women's refuge were the main services provided.

The number of successful prosecutions had risen year on year. In 2013/14, 79% were successful. This was above the national average.

Lancashire Probation Trust recorded 46 orders made for Building Better Relationships Programme between April and December 2013 in Lancashire.

Councillors were invited to ask questions and raise any comments in relation to the report, a summary of which is provided below:

- Members applauded the strategic approach to domestic abuse and praised the partnership for the amount of work it had done in the first year, but raised concerns about the resources available for the work in the future. It was recognised that the districts were fully engaged, and that this had been cemented by the introduction of the domestic homicide review, an extremely important but costly process. It was noted that the Police and Crime Commissioner had put a pot of money aside for independent chairs to support these reviews.
- Concerns were raised on the under reporting of domestic abuse, and also the level of support available for male victims of abuse. It was highlighted that you were more at risk of domestic abuse if you were female, if you were disabled, and if you were between the ages of 16 and 30. There were also minority specialist workers who delivered services in a culturally specialist way and tap into the under reporting in minority groups. The Committee was informed that the national statistics indicated 1 in 4 women suffered domestic abuse in her lifetime while it was 1 in 7 men. However, for "high risk" abuse cases, 96% of victims were female. Women were more likely to experience severe abuse over a long period of time. All the work that the Partnership was doing was all based on the level of harm, and so was more likely to target women. However, the issue of violence against men, and in same sex partnerships was being taken seriously, and it was confirmed that men suffering high level abuse would receive the same level of support as women. It was important to get men to report the abuse suffered by them.
- Members enquired how third sector providers were involved under the umbrella of the Domestic Abuse Commissioning Strategy. They were informed that third sector providers were involved at every single stage of the strategy and in all of the Domestic Abuse Action Plan Work Streams, and had reps on every one of the work streams. The providers also had a forum where they shared best practice, and would do and did not work.
- The question of repeat offences was raised and what level of follow up there was. It was stated that repeat offences were still an issue. There were also important issues about both repeat victims and repeat offenders. There was a pattern of repeat offenders moving on from partner to partner. Repeat offences was in the partnerships action plan but there was still more work to be done.
- The Committee enquired what level of feedback there was on domestic abuse from the NHS and doctors' surgeries. There were many health

practitioners on board. They were always represented at Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences regarding safeguarding. Since the NICE Guidance recommendations, some hospitals in Lancashire were setting time aside and having staff trained to deal with domestic abuse patients alone. There was more work in the pipeline to be developed.

- They were informed that one of the questions someone is asked when they are risk assessed on the levels of abuse is on sexual abuse and the support workers are trained so they could deal with the sexual assault side as well as the domestic abuse side. 52% of Lancashire's domestic abuse victims had suffered some kind of sexual assault. The numbers of domestic abuse cases that go on to homicides were relatively low but they did happen and five had been recorded this year. Through the risk assessment process the police have a questionnaire they look at when attending any incident looking at all different patterns of behaviour which might draw out from the victim the bigger story. The risk assessment process is being looked at nationally as part of the HMIC inspection and Lancashire is leading on this nationally.
- The subject of the criminal justice system was raised and the way in which incidents were reported. Members enquired if nuisance calls or stalking got included in the statistics for domestic abuse. The criminal justice system was not just looking at incidents reported by the police but also capturing incidents that may be reported to the third sector. Lancashire had the highest percentage of caseloads from the CPS that constituted domestic violence. 18.5% of the caseload from the last month was domestic violence. One of the Prosecution Service's targets was the attrition of domestic abuse cases. The attrition rate in Lancashire was good but there was still more to be done. The main reason for cases being lost was witness withdrawal. Through the Commissioning Strategy the Prosecution Service was looking at more support for victims.
- The Committee were informed that there were around 27,000 incidents recorded by the police. Over 9,000 of these were recorded as crimes. Two thirds of these crimes were assaults but not always with injury. 10% of these assaults were harassment and 10% were criminal damage.
- Regarding mental health relating to domestic abuse, it may be a factor for the start of the abuse but also after the abuse. Members enquired how mental services were used in relation to domestic abuse. It was vital to make every contact count and identify and refer people where there are issues. With regards to health there had to be a sustainable system in place. As part of the Commissioning Strategy victims were asked what needs they had. From the new pilot project it was known how many victims suffered from mental health, substance misuse issues and how many had children and if these children were affected. At the moment, the data indicates that at least a third of Lancashire's victims had mental health issues.

- The Committee enquired how to encourage people to report domestic abuse incidents. Reporting of incidents needed to be increased but at an earlier stage in the domestic abusive cycle. The way to do this was to give victims or people who knew victims confidence in the services provide to them. Workforce development was one of the ways to build confidence.
- Concerns were raised that a lot of domestic abuse cases were going unnoticed with victims going to hospitals for treatment and not saying it was a domestic abuse incident. The Committee was informed that national statistics showed that 79% of domestic abuse cases were not reported leaving only 21% reported. Workforce development was important. Staff in hospitals must be trained to ask the victims the right questions in the right way so as to get the domestic abuse cases reported.
- When there were large sporting events and tournaments were taking place Members felt that they could be used to advertise the problem of domestic abuse and get the message out there to more people. The message of alcohol consumption could be tied in with this. All publicity around domestic abuse would be welcomed. It was felt that local campaigns because they can hit directly at target audiences.

Resolved: That

- i. the Committee support the partnership approach to reducing the harm caused by domestic abuse as set out in the draft Lancashire (12) Domestic Abuse Commissioning Strategy.
- ii. a further report specifically on the work of health bodies in relation to Domestic Abuse be presented to the committee in around 6 months
- iii. an update on progress be presented in 9-12 months

6. Work Plan and Task Group Update

A report was presented summarising the work to be undertaken by the Committee in the coming months, including an update on task group work. It was agreed that, following on from the previous agenda item, further reports would be added to the workplan on Domestic Abuse as set out in the minutes.

Resolved: That the report be noted

7. Urgent Business

None.

8. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be on Friday 11 July, at 10.30 at the County Hall, Preston.

I M Fisher
County Secretary and Solicitor

County Hall
Preston