

**REPORT TO:** Safer Policy and Performance Board  
**DATE:** 26 June 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 Halton Policy and Performance Board in relation to the activities being supported across the Borough by Halton Domestic Abuse Forum (HDAF) in response to domestic abuse and sexual violence.

**2. RECOMMENDATION: That members of the Board: Consider and comment on any of the content of the report.**

**3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 In Halton we believe that tackling Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence is vital to building stronger, safer and healthier communities. We recognise that Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence can occur in many forms and can be experienced differently by different groups, such as women and girls, members of the LGBT and BME communities and men, who may disproportionately experience various elements of these abuses. It is widely evidenced that these issues not only impact on the victim, their families and children but also the wider community with the associated emotional and financial costs. Thus, as a multi-agency partnership, we aim to tackle Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence in their widest forms and provide support to all victims within our area.

3.2 To mark St Valentine's Day in Halton, HDAF supported the successful delivery of a two week marketing and communication campaign. This included a radio advertisement of Wire FM highlighting where victims can access help, the distribution of posters to display in public facing buildings including all Halton G.P Surgeries, Hospitals and Dentists, Council Buildings etc. The publicity material has been further displayed in the town centre areas on pillar posters and on the buses. An animated public awareness raising advertisement has been developed and is being played in hospital waiting areas on the (television) screens were victims may be accessing services.

3.3 The Halton Sanctuary Scheme is an initiative which aims to make it possible for victims of domestic violence and abuse to remain in their homes and feel safe. It hopes to avoid the associated traumas and inconvenience of being forced to relocate to other areas away from

family networks, employment and schooling, and reduce the need for temporary accommodation. The Halton Sanctuary Policy produced by the Halton Domestic Abuse Forum (HDAF) and Housing Partnership in association with specialist providers sets out how victims of domestic violence and abuse can access the sanctuary scheme; the process and standards to enable additional security measures to be installed in the victim's home. In line with the Sanctuary Policy, Registered Social Landlords (RSL) are responsible for determining and installing Sanctuary features on properties they maintain. In response to local RSL requests training sessions were offered by HDAF to the frontline workers who will be responsible for completing Sanctuary works, this was a partnership training event with staff from Halton Borough Council working closely with Cheshire Police and Halton Domestic Abuse Service.

The development days were positively received and a good example of partnership working and its inherent benefits. The information provided was well received and feedback of the development day has been extremely encouraging.

HDAF have committed to providing more of these multi-agency training days in the future relating to Sanctuary if any other RSL's come forward requiring this training for their staff.

- 3.4 The government launched a consultation to ask for views on whether the current cross-government definition of domestic violence should be widened. It also sort views on whether the current definition is being applied consistently across government, and if it is understood by practitioners, victims and perpetrators.

HDAF coordinated the response to the government's consultation on the widening of the definition of domestic violence and endorses the following:

***The definition should be amended to include explicitly 'coercive control' and that the definition should also protect 16 and 17 year olds.***

*HDAF concluded to add that the definition should also refer to Domestic Abuse rather than violence, as it is a more accurate reflection of the varying types and strategies used to control a victim rather than merely identifying the physical aspect of abuse.*

- 3.5 Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) is a dedicated unit staffed by experienced people who provide crisis and aftercare services to anyone who has been raped or experienced serious sexual abuse whether now or in the past.

A SARC provides a comprehensive and co-ordinated forensic, counselling and aftercare service to men, women and children who have experienced rape or sexual assault.

RASAC the aftercare service for rape and sexual assault victims, referrals have risen slightly with police referrals now surpassing the amount of self-referrals. This is potentially due to the launch of the Dedicated Rape Unit.

This period has also seen a significant increase in the amount of cases being taken up by the Crown Prosecution Service; four clients have been informed that their perpetrators have been charged and two court dates have been set for later in the year.

- 3.6 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. The Halton Children's Safeguarding Board has identified Domestic Abuse as priority for 2012-13 within its business plan.
- 3.7 Halton MARAC has a current rolling NI 32 performance level of 28%. 70 repeat cases have been discussed at MARAC during 2011-12. Over the previous year 296 children have been identified within the MARAC process, with 116 children identified in quarter 4.
- 3.8 Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) – 51 referrals received this quarter demonstrating a 112% increase on last year's quarter 4 figure of 24.

This is really positive and would indicate that there is a growing sense of confidence from Halton residents accessing sexual support services, breaking the silence of abuse.

- 3.9 The role of the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Coordinator now sits within the remit of the Halton Community Safety Team, tackling domestic abuse in Halton is a key priority for the team.

#### **4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Halton Sanctuary Scheme Policy, Procedure and Practise had been developed.

#### **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 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

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)

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.

### **5.3 Children and Young People in Halton**

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.

### **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**

The role of the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Coordinator has been mainstream funded.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 None to note

## **9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None under the meaning of the Act