



*Scrutiny Review of the Draft  
Domestic Abuse Strategy 2014/15*

Report  
October 2014

## **CONTENTS**

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Paragraph</b>
Purpose of the report	3	1
Structure of the report	3	2
Introduction	3	3
Methodology	4	2
Evidence and Analysis with findings/conclusions and recommendations	4	3
Overall Conclusion	8	3

  

<b>Annexes</b>	<b>Number</b>
Topic brief	9
Methodology	11
Domestic Abuse Strategy	12
Action Plan	13

## **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

The purpose of the report, as outlined in the initial topic brief (at *Annex 1*) is to:

- Identify level of Domestic Abuse and identify where Halton is in relation to neighbouring LA's.
- Review existing models of service to meet need by identifying areas of good practice across the sub region of Cheshire
- Explore adoption of white ribbon status for the Borough of Halton
- Identify areas of good practice across the sub region of Cheshire

## **2.0 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT**

This report is structured with the introduction, a brief summary of the methodology followed by evidence, analysis with findings/conclusions and recommendations. The annexes include the topic brief, methodology detail, data and statistics considered by the group, The Draft Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy and a supporting Scrutiny and Review Action Plan to ensure delivery.

## **3.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **3.1 Reason the report was commissioned**

Presented levels of domestic abuse within Halton Borough Council have been identified as a problem. The scrutiny panel wanted to examine the situation, make analysis of the impacting factors on this and feed-in to activity aimed at raising awareness of services available to support victims.

### **3.2 Policy and Performance Boards**

This report was commissioned as a scrutiny working group for the Safer Policy and Performance Board.

### 3.3 Membership of the Topic Team

Membership of the Topic Team included:

Members	Officers
Cllr Darren Lea Cllr Margaret Ratcliffe Cllr Val Hill Cllr Pauline Sinnott	Chris Patino – Operational Director - Community and Environment Mike Andrews – Community Safety Co-ordinator Sarah Ashcroft – Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator Nicola Hallmark – Principal Policy Officer

### 4.0 Methodology Summary

This scrutiny review was conducted through a number of means:

- Monthly meetings of the scrutiny review topic group;
- Provision of information briefings/verbal reports (details can be found in *Annex 2*);
- Provision of data/statistics by key members of staff

### 5.0 Evidence (summary of evidence gathered) and Analysis with findings/conclusions

#### 5.1 Identification of level of the problem

Sarah Ashcroft, Halton's Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator presented figures for the panel

Expansion on these figures and interpretation of them revealed that:

- Halton is tied to Cheshire for figures due to the shared police constabulary
- Comparative figures with Merseyside regions are not collated
- Where Merseyside data was available the data was not comparable due to differences in recording
- Incidents were referred to as 'calls for service' and were represented by numbers of 999 calls
- Halton's 'calls for service' for 2012/13 was 930, and 905 for 2013/4. This data was reported to be greater, per capita head, than any other Cheshire Authority
- Consideration needs to be given to differences between the Authority areas, in terms of levels of relative wealth and deprivation, density of populations, employment rates, educational attainments, housing provision and social welfare issues such as drug and alcohol dependency or rates of physical disability; and potential for

impact of these factors on home life and likelihood/risk of domestic abuse

- In relation to Halton's proportionately high quota of calls for service consideration also needs to be made to the close proximity of housing in the Borough and how this affects reporting of incidents
- Incidence of unreported domestic abuse was deemed to be much higher than reported figures (It was suggested that the average victim has been in a relationship for five years with 33 instances of incident before a report is made). Therefore, it was suggested that high rate of incidents could be considered positive, due to the services in place allowing for greater engagement
- Seasonal trends were identified in levels of incidents. Supposition revealed that there may be some links to financial pressures at peak times of year but no substantive data available to prove this

## **Conclusion**

The group concluded that the figures in themselves were not the necessarily the sole indicator of a negative situation. While any incidence of domestic abuse is negative there are wider considerations that purely the figures relating to call for service.

It was surmised that work already conducted in relation to awareness raising, prevention and both victim and survivor support and engagement, was invaluable to the Borough's portfolio of activity. In addition it was felt that the further outcomes and recommendations of the scrutiny panel would supplement the breadth and depth of the current activity.

### ***Recommendations:***

- (i) ***That Members continue to monitor data but not take it in isolation or without further analysis from officers***

## **5.2 White Ribbon status**

Mike Andrew, Community Safety Officer, gave a verbal overview of the requirements to achieve White Ribbon Status.

The White Ribbon Campaign is an international effort to end violence committed by men against women. It's led by a voluntary organisation which undertakes activity to raise awareness and promote change in social attitudes towards abuse. Wearing the White Ribbon is a personal pledge never to commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women. The Campaign also registers 'Corporate' status to mark an organisation-wide pledge, as well as 'Town' status to recognise the commitment of a body of organisations.

Resources requirements:

- Collating and evaluating work and activity already undertaken across the Borough
- Applying for 'Corporate' status and evidencing this – at a cost of £450 per annum (Community Safety Budget)
- Action planning towards 'Town' status for the Borough of Halton through the outline of further activity

## **Conclusion**

The group noted that White Ribbon status was a worthwhile and manageable achievement. They appreciated that status in itself does not alleviate the issue but adds credence to the Borough's position on domestic violence.

Consideration was given to the fact that the status is targeted at domestic violence from a female victim's perspective and that the Borough's activity and intervention was aimed at a wider group, including male victims, survivors, family support, and perpetrators.

### ***Recommendations:***

- (i) To apply for Corporate White Ribbon status.***
- (ii) To action plan towards achieving Town White Ribbon status.***

## **5.3 Implementing an awareness raising campaign**

The topic group explored a number of creative and innovative ideas for raising awareness, across the Borough, to ensuring services were accessed appropriately and timely.

Ideas put forward were aimed at reaching relevant targets audiences, at appropriate times, and with the best use of limited financial resource. While some activity could be funded using existing Community Safety budget it was felt that a wider spectrum of activity could be undertaken with additional support. With this in mind agreement was reached to approach the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Public Health for funding, given the impact of health issues.

Various audiences were explored and it was found that work already undertaken through the community safety team impacted on key themes, including working with children and young people in schools.

The appropriateness of materials was discussed at length and the potential negative impact this could have on victims. For

example, should an abuser find a leaflet or card with support service information on in a victim's belongings.

Ideas included:

- Promotional wording on the back of receipts. A number of store were identified as providing this service and the panel agreed that the 99p Shop would reach the widest demographic
- Electronic 'Ticker Tape' messages, with service access details, could be displayed during stadium events
- Internal to the Council – to reach staff and their families – an article to be written for InTouch and messages to go on pay slips
- Work to be done with local press to gain editorial content
- The Brindley – pantomime tickets may be able to have messages put on to them
- Additional support for schools' advocacy work

### **Conclusion**

That a number of 'quick win' activities could be progressed in the short-term, and with minimal resource, and that others could be mapped out to reach different demographics over a period of time.

The ideas put forward were considered to additionally impact on the Health agenda. As financial resource is limited, for continued and sustained activity, officers should seek additional funding through the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Public Health.

It was concluded that supplementing existing activity could impact on 'call for service' figures, but that this was not necessarily an issue for concern but in fact a positive in terms of engagement. An ideal scenario was envisaged as additional take-up early intervention services.

#### ***Recommendations:***

- (i) That proposals are progressed with the CCG and Public Health for financial support of the work***
- (ii) That work undertaken further influences the Borough submission for White Ribbon status***

## **5.4 Adoption of the Halton Domestic Abuse Strategy**

The group reviewed the draft Strategy (Annex 3) and commended the officers and agencies involved in its formation. The document was thought to be thorough and comprehensive. Additionally it was felt that Halton were making active progress and were leading the field, comparative to neighbouring authorities, in developing the draft Strategy.

## **Conclusion**

The topic group were in agreement that the draft Strategy offered a complete approach to tackling the issue of domestic abuse.

### ***Recommendations:***

- (i) The draft Halton Domestic Abuse Strategy be ratified by Members and held up as a flagship approach across the Borough***

## **6.0 Overall Conclusion**

This scrutiny review has been both a successful and a worthwhile exercise in terms of covering all the outputs and outcomes from the initial topic brief and gaining a thorough understanding and standpoint in relation to domestic abuse across Halton.

The draft multi-agency Halton Domestic Abuse Strategy has been reviewed and recommended for adoption. Additional activity has been identified to embed and compliment the themes of the Domestic Abuse Strategy.

Recommendations for further improvement that have been identified from this scrutiny review have been arranged into an Action Plan at *Annex 4* for ease of reference and monitoring.