

REPORT TO: Safer Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 6th February 2024

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director, Environment & Regeneration

PORTFOLIO: Community Safety

SUBJECT: Domestic Abuse Service

WARDS: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To update Members of the Board on strategic and service developments in delivering the Council's duties on domestic abuse.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

1) the report be noted; and

2) The Board comment on delivery and the forward programme

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Domestic Abuse Service has continued to evolve since the Independent Domestic Violence Advocate service transferred into the Council in January 2023. A re-structure process has been completed to improve terms and conditions of staff and expand the team. There are a number of vacancies currently in recruitment to increase capacity and resilience to the team including a Case Officer role to work with perpetrators to support changing behaviours.

3.2 Demand continues to be exceptionally high; there are currently 199 open cases with the team, 1023 cases have been closed and there are 114 cases pending.

3.3 The additional staff resource will provide the capacity to better respond to service demands.

3.4 Identification and Referral to Improve Safety (IRIS)

The health service plays an integral role in addressing the issue of and transforming responses to domestic abuse. The IRIS programme is a training, referral, and advocacy model to support clinicians to better support their patients affected by domestic abuse and to increase the awareness of domestic abuse within general practice.

- 3.5 IRIS provides specialist training to clinical professionals, alongside administration staff, within local general practices. IRIS training supports clinicians to recognise and respond to patients affected by domestic abuse and the programme provides a direct and trusted source for advocacy for patients following disclosure. The IRIS programme is an evidence-based, effective and cost-effective intervention to improve the primary care response to domestic abuse and is nationally recognised.
- 3.6 Following a successful application to the IRIS Project, Halton has successfully been granted £97k additional funding to set up a local IRIS programme for a 12-month pilot. The Halton Domestic Abuse Team will be supporting the delivery and a new fixed term post will be recruited to, Domestic Abuse Advocate Educator who will be providing direct training and support to the 14 GP surgeries in Halton as well as holding a case load for patients identified within these settings. Depending on recruitment timelines delivery is anticipated to commence by March/April 2024.
- 3.7 Delivery and impacts will be monitored and evaluated to inform system learning, a potential sustainability plan and way forward for the approach in Halton.
- 3.8 **Halton Public Health and Marac Review Co-creation Workshop**
On the 24th of November 2023, a second Domestic Abuse Development event of 2023 was held supported by Halton Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, a statutory board responsible for the delivery of Halton's vision – “for everyone to be able to recognise domestic abuse, take responsibility and work together to tackle it. No one should live in fear, Halton aims to create safer homes, safer communities and safer society benefitting all our residents and reducing fear and harm.”
- 3.9 The event was to highlight and feedback the culmination of a significant piece of Halton research, led by the nationally recognised domestic abuse research institute in the UK, Safelives.
- 3.10 The Halton Public Health and Marac review provides key insight and recommendations into the issue of domestic abuse in Halton, it has been a lengthy and thorough review process, using various data sets, interviews, focus groups, surveys, and engagement with local survivors as well as local professionals. The Workshop gave the opportunity to share the findings, inform future areas of development, provide meaningful local insight, and identify barriers and challenges for change. Many stakeholders recognise the importance of tackling domestic abuse in all of its forms in Halton, and the event was positively supported and received 81 delegates attended the event, representing 16 different agencies from various Council departments, Police, Health, Probation, Department of Work and Pensions, a number of Housing Providers, and Third Sector organisations.
- 3.11 Some highlights shared at the event are:-

- Safelives estimate there are 20,000 adult victims in Halton who have experienced domestic abuse at some point in their lives since the age of 16.
- An estimated 15% of these adult victims will have experienced both partner and family abuse.
- Of the total estimated adult victims 13,500 (68%) are estimated to be female.
- Of the total estimated adult victims 6,000 (32%) are estimated to be male.

Prevalence of adult victims in the past year Halton

- Safelives estimate there are 5,500 adult victims in Halton who have experienced domestic abuse at some point in the last year.
- Safelives estimate that around 8% of those adult victims will have experienced both partner and family abuse.
- Of the total estimated adult victims in the past year, 3,500 (68%) are estimated to be female.
- Of the total estimated adult victims in the past year, 1,500 (32%) are estimated to be male.

Prevalence in the past year of partner abuse (IPV) in Halton

- Safelives estimate that there were 4,000 adult victims in the local area who have experienced partner abuse in the past year.
- Safelives estimate that there were 3,000 children living in a household with partner abuse in the past year.
- Safelives estimate that there were 3,000 people using abusive behaviours in their intimate partner relationships in the past year in the local area.
- Of those 20% are estimated to be serial perpetrators of domestic abuse.

3.12 At the heart of everything we develop in Halton has to be the voices of local people, the event benefitted from having local service user voices giving their accounts and experiences, this was immensely impactful and promotes a shared understanding with professionals and key stakeholders and decision makers. Consulting with and learning from the experiences of local victims / survivors and children is key to developing plans and services that are fit for purpose. Halton recognises the importance of authentic service user voices in our local service delivery, and commits to improving existing arrangements to ensure design of services that are responsive to the needs of Halton's communities.

3.13 Having the opportunity to take stock of Halton's current position with stakeholders is essential and valuable in developing a whole system, collaborative learning approach to Domestic Abuse. This supports and informs the programme of work for the multi-agency Halton Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, which will consider next steps and implementation of the recommendations identified. The Board strives to

continually improve Halton's local services and support available to all those affected by Domestic Abuse.

- 3.14 The Halton Domestic Abuse Partnership Board supports the delivery of multi-agency workforce training and development relating to domestic abuse, with key dates made available via <https://haltonsafeguarding.co.uk>.
- 3.15 **White Ribbon**
The Council supported a motion to protect women and girls in October 2018 which included accreditation to White Ribbon: - <https://councillors.halton.gov.uk/documents/g8904/Printed%20minutes%2018th-Oct-2023%2018.30%20Council.pdf?T=1>
- 3.16 HBC supported the White Ribbon Campaign in November 2023 promoting ending men's violence against women starts when we #ChangeTheStory. White Ribbon Day took place on the 25th November, actively encouraging individuals and organisations to make consistent choices and actions so that we #ChangeTheStory for women and girls to live their lives free from the fear of violence.
- 3.17 Halton's support of White Ribbon Day coincided with the second Halton Domestic Abuse Partnership Development event of the year detailed in 3.3. The event launched support for the 2023 campaign and commenced a campaign of activity throughout the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. Several key issues were highlighted during the 16 days of activism, with a focus of sharing and dispelling some of the common myths surrounding domestic abuse topics and challenging stereotypes and misconceptions as well as promoting local domestic abuse services and support and self-help options for individuals, friends and family looking for advice.
- 3.18 Halton developed a social media toolkit that was promoted widely via social media focusing on daily topics, using several hashtags of note, including the popular #ChangeTheStory #WhiteRibbonDay #16Days #ChangeTheStory #WRD23 #WhiteRibbon #MakeThePromise.
- 3.19 During the 16 days of activism, both the Mersey Gateway and Silver Jubilee bridge were lit white as a symbol of local support for the White Ribbon Campaign.
- 3.20 In addition, White Ribbon campaign material was distributed and made available to partner agencies to display to raise awareness of domestic abuse across the Borough.
- 3.21 The Council have made a commitment to achieving White Ribbon Accredited status, to achieve this the Halton Domestic Abuse Partnership Board will govern the White Ribbon Steering Group and is a key workstream in progress.

3.22 **Halton Resolve**

Resolve is an emotional health and wellbeing service for children, young people and families to reduce the impact of domestic abuse on individuals, families and the community.

3.23 In May 2023, the Council contracted Halton Resolve service (Children's Society) to provide additional support alongside Social Care to children and young people who have already been placed on either a Children In Need (CIN), or Care Plan, and are aged between 5 to 18 years. Halton Resolve are leading the intervention programme Gateway aimed to improve victims' knowledge and understanding of domestic abuse and impact on children offering both group and 1-1 support for parents impacted by domestic abuse.

3.24 The team is made up of experienced and skilled professionals who provide an opportunity for children and young people to be believed, reassured and listened to. In all the Resolve work, the voice of the child is extremely important and central to the plan of work that takes place. It provides: -

- A safe and confidential space where a young person and family feel listened to and understood.
- Up to 12 one to one sessions of individual and family intervention to reduce risks and issues specifically related to domestic abuse that take place face to face (digitally is also an option)
- Sessions include safety planning, awareness of healthy and unhealthy relationships and resilience building to help create a toolbox of healthy coping strategies.
- Support to professionals with pre-court proceedings.

3.25 30 referrals were received between July and September 2023. Of the 30 children and young people referred, 22 young people received in person 1-1 support. 6 parents declined, 2 were declined the service as not domestic abuse related. 20 parents have been referred for the Gateway programme. All 30 children and young people have children social care involvement.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no policy implications at this stage.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no financial implications; the delivery described is within existing resources and the external funding secured to deliver the IRIS programme.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

Domestic Abuse impacts children and young people's life chances. The awareness raising aims to change behaviour thus improving outcomes for future generations of children and young people.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

The service has created additional roles and secured additional resources to roll out training and awareness of Domestic Abuse supporting collaborative learning across Halton's system in better understanding Domestic Abuse and the impacts.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

The impacts of Domestic Abuse are far reaching significantly impacting the health system and wellbeing of those effected by Domestic Abuse. The Iris work described in the report will directly support GP Surgery staff to have increased awareness and offer support to victims at earlier points in the victim journey.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Halton experiences high risk, high harm, high volume Domestic Abuse which impacts neighbourhoods and communities. Measures to raise awareness and tackle Domestic Abuse are pivotal in striving to build strong resilient communities.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None to report.

8.0 RISK ANALYSIS

None to report.

9.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

None at present.

10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

None to report

11.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

10.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.