

**Safer and Stronger Communities  
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**22 September 2020**

**Domestic Abuse – Progress Report**



Safe Durham Partnership

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**Report of Jeanne Trotter, OPCVC – Acting Policy Lead - Chair of DASVEG**

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**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To provide the SSC with an update on the DASVEG plan on a page and other related activity.

**Background**

- 2 The objectives outlined within the DASVEG Plan on a Page were developed following a multi-agency planning session in December 2016. The plan was subsequently reviewed at a multi-agency stakeholder event in March 2019 where it was agreed that the headline objectives continue to be relevant. While the overarching objectives of the Plan on a Page have therefore been retained, related actions have been updated to reflect progress and next steps. Stakeholder feedback also highlighted the need to include Sexual Violence.
- 3 The vision of the County Durham and Darlington Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group is: that all agencies work together to seek to reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse in County Durham and Darlington and continue to provide and further develop a co-ordinated community response that provides high quality preventative, support and protection services and effectively deals with perpetrators. Our vision for sexual violence is that it will not be tolerated and that perpetrators will be brought to account for their actions. Victims of sexual violence will be supported, treated with dignity and respect and made to feel safe within their community whilst seeing their offenders brought to justice.
- 4 The existing three objectives are :
  - Objective 1 – reduction in repeat victims and serial perpetrators of domestic abuse
  - Objective 2 – Domestic abuse is prevented through early intervention
  - Objective 3 – More invisible victims are identified and offered support

- 5 Given the nature and scale of the issues involved in sexual violence, a recommendation was made, and agreed, to develop a separate Plan on a Page for this area of work in order to encompass a number of key principles i.e.
- a. Prevention through early intervention and education;
  - b. Delivering an effective, prompt and joined up response for those people affected by sexual violence;
  - c. Listening to victims and survivors and ensuring their voices are heard and not lost in the 'system';
  - d. Identifying those most at risk of harm;
  - e. Promoting good practice and continuous improvement based on sound evaluation of practice and relevant research.
- 6 Ensuring the voices of those affected by Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence, including victims, perpetrators, children, families and communities, are embedded in planning and delivery mechanisms continues to be a key priority along with collaboration between agencies and the assessment and evaluation of interventions.

**Objective 1 – reduce repeat victims and serial perpetrators of domestic abuse**

- 7 The Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination (MATAC) initiative aims to reduce reoffending amongst serial perpetrators of domestic abuse by enhancing multi-agency involvement in using care, compliance and consequence interventions to manage the most prolific and harmful serial domestic abuse perpetrators. The process was introduced by Durham Constabulary as part of the Domestic Abuse Whole System Approach (DAWSA) project involving five other Police Force areas. MATAC continues to be operational across Durham and Darlington and is being evaluated as part of a wider piece of work across all six Police Forces involved in the DAWSA project. A separate evaluation is being undertaken specific to the Durham Force area.
- 8 While early findings from the wider evaluation indicate positive results in terms of perpetrator awareness and engagement with behaviour change programmes, etc. it is acknowledged that assessing the impact on behaviour can be challenging and in order to be confident that behaviour change has been achieved and maintained after MATAC, a post-programme window of at least 12 months for each perpetrator would be required in order to make judgements about sustained changes in behaviour and offending rates. DASVEG will continue to monitor progress and outcomes.

- 9 Work is ongoing to evaluate and establish future resource requirements in respect of perpetrator prevention and/or awareness programmes.
- 10 The Checkpoint Quality Assurance Group (QAG) continues to meet to quality assure processes and outcomes in relation to DA perpetrators being offered Checkpoint as an alternative to prosecution. The first summary report of the work carried out by the Group was produced in April 2020. The purpose of the report is to inform DASVEG members of the work being carried out by the Group and to report on the findings that have been identified to date.
- 11 A number of recommendations and best practice have been identified by the QAG and discussion on implementation will be a subject for debate at a future DASVEG meeting. The recommendations include:
  - a. Future commissioning decisions for domestic abuse services to factor in the different approaches required to address non-intimate partner DA as opposed to intimate partner DA;
  - b. Consideration for further Impact evaluation such as exploring opportunities to utilise the Distance Travelled Tool and the Signs of Safety approach when evaluating the impact of the scheme;
  - c. Children's Services to be informed of completion of contract as part of exit strategy, where relevant, to enable continued services post contract;
  - d. The option for victim support to be revisited at a later stage if declined initially. In particular, when a family is open to Team around the Family (TAF) or One Point, these services should be utilised to explore the offer of victim support at a later stage;
  - e. More support to be made available for victims wanting to proceed with a restraining order if they can't afford to pursue a non-molestation order;
  - f. Introduce the flexibility to enable professional judgment to be taken into account when assessing the appropriateness of a Checkpoint intervention;
  - g. Consideration to be given to how best to improve information sharing between the Checkpoint team and Children's Services to ensure a more coordinated response. In particular, a process for escalation of non-compliance when children are involved to be explored along with and sharing relevant actions/reviews undertaken by social care colleagues to be shared and recorded on COMET with the longer terms benefits for both agencies being measured;

h. Dip sampling of failed cases to be carried out to determine the outcome following non-engagement/reoffending and presentation and consideration of compliance report at the Magistrates Court.

12 The full report and recommendations will be subject to discussion and approval by DASVEG members.

13 Recognising that issues relating to accommodation often results in victims remaining in abusive relationships, DASVEG will be introducing more formalised working and reporting arrangements with partners in the housing and accommodation sector and it has been agreed that accommodation for victims and perpetrators of Domestic abuse will be subject to a deep dive exercise. DASVEG has also now established links with the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA).

**Objective 2 – Domestic Abuse is prevented through early intervention**

14 In order to finalise the work stream priority actions, a review of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) Domestic Abuse findings and subsequent implementation plan was required.

15 The JTAI inspection had previously identified that:

- a. The voice of children and young people affected by domestic abuse did not sufficiently inform the priority areas DASVEG
- b. The lines of accountability between DASVEG and the Durham Safeguarding Children's Board (DCSP) required strengthening

16 The review identified that the issues raised as part of the JTAI Domestic Abuse had not been sufficiently resolved and that the voice of children and young people effected by domestic abuse were not clearly identified within the current workstream structure as current workstream proposed priority areas have a focus on adult victims and abusers.

17 To ensure that the areas outlined in paragraph 15-16 were addressed, the DASVEG Early Intervention work stream has a clear focus on Children, Young People and Families and links with the DSCP through the Embedded Learning Group.

18 This approach will ensure that vulnerable children, young people and their families are prioritised and reduces the opportunity for duplication whilst at the same time strengthening the links between DASVEG and the DSCP.

- 19 To date significant work has been undertaken to review the current offer to the workforce through training and development and has seen the development of:
- a. A Practitioners Guide to Coercive and Controlling Behaviours resource made available to all partners and housed on the DSCP website
  - b. Contributed to the development and implementation of the Children and Families Practice Toolkit
  - c. DASH Risk Assessment training delivered to Children and Young People's Services staff, with plans to make that available to multi agency partners
  - d. The development of a tiered approach to training across the partnership, this will range from basic awareness training to more targeted programmes which will be made available to multi agency partners no later than autumn 2020
  - e. The collating and co-ordination of wider online resources that can be made easily accessible to all partners virtually
  - f. Supporting staff with the development of response to Operation Encompass in an education setting
- 20 Due to the current COVID 19 pandemic, the group have also been involved in contributing to the wider Domestic Abuse Communications Plan and have worked collectively with specialist provider, Harbour Support Services, in a multi-agency approach to supporting vulnerable families during lockdown.
- 21 Priorities for the group moving forward include:
- a. Supporting services through recovery and restoration to ensure those families effected by domestic abuse are supported and safe
  - b. Further development and launch of an enhanced workforce development programme in partnership with the DSCP training offer
  - c. Further develop Operation Encompass
  - d. Review the support made available to families through universal services including the Vulnerable Parent Pathway delivered by Harrogate District Foundation Trust Family Health Service

**Objective 3 – More invisible victims are identified and offered support**

- 22 A programme of work has been developed by a Task and Finish Group aimed at achieving a better understanding of the issue and this includes:
- a. Developing and implementing an ongoing DASVEG communications and engagement strategy and action plan;

- b. Exploring the potential, including resource requirements and monitoring and evaluation processes, to deliver an on-going programme of Domestic Abuse Workplace Champions training;
- c. Consider extending Workplace Champions training to encompass Community Champions training;
- d. Reviewing information from service providers relating to referral sources that can be used to target the above training programmes;
- e. Establishing a better understanding of characteristics (geographic and demographic) relating to current reporting to ensure effective targeting of awareness raising re: hidden victims;
- f. Including coercive control in awareness raising campaigns and workplace/community champions training.

### **Commissioning**

- 23 A budget prioritisation exercise is underway and this will form the basis for future commissioning plans.

### **COVID 19**

- 24 Operating under the conditions imposed by the COVID 19 Pandemic has proved challenging for all partners particularly those seeking to maintain delivery of support for victims, their families and perpetrators. However, these challenges have also demonstrated the benefits of collaborative working and over the past five months significant work has been undertaken by partners to identify, agree and implement innovative ways of working that have enabled continuity of support. In addition, the extra funding allocated to Police and Crime Commissioners for provision of tailored support to victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence has helped with the cost of introducing new ways of working, replacing lost income and coping with increased demand.

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