

EXECUTIVE

9TH SEPTEMBER 2008

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF ADULT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Title: Barking and Dagenham Domestic Violence Strategy 2008-2011	For Decision
Summary: The Barking and Dagenham Domestic Violence Strategy 2008-11 provides essential strategic direction for the Barking & Dagenham Partnership to support victims of domestic violence and their children, to hold perpetrators accountable for their behaviour, to raise public awareness of domestic violence and to improve professionals' response to victims, children and perpetrators. The Strategy has been subject to extensive consultation, with the benefit of input from all key agencies and professional groups. Wards Affected: All	
Recommendation(s) The Executive is asked to: 1. Endorse the Strategy.	
Reason(s) To assist in the achievement of the Council priorities; Developing rights and responsibilities with the local community, promoting equal opportunities and celebrating diversity and improving health, housing and social care.	
Implications Financial: Although this Strategy identifies areas for development that would benefit from greater investment, it does not commit the Council to any further resources. The strategy may be used in support of future bids by the partnership. The recommendations in the Strategy for the improvement of the Partnership's response to domestic violence should assist the Borough in reducing its estimated £82m cost to local public services annually. Legal: The Strategy considers such issues as housing, the criminal justice process and child protection, and whilst it makes broad recommendations in these areas, any detailed proposals will need to be worked through in the context of the legal frameworks covering those Council duties. Risk Management: The key risk of not implementing this Strategy is that there will be no overall strategic direction for the borough partnership in its response to domestic violence. This will impact on our ability to provide services that protect victims and their children and challenge	

perpetrators, as well as impacting on our ability to prevent domestic violence, repeat victimisation, and domestic violence homicide in the short and long term. Should a critical incident occur, which requires a review of actions taken by public authorities, it is essential that the Borough can demonstrate the continuous review and development of these essential services for which the Strategy provides a framework.

In particular, this Strategy presents the first opportunity to drive forward responses for children and young people exposed to domestic violence, as they form the largest group of people experiencing domestic violence.

This Strategy will form an integral part of the partnership approach to meeting the two domestic violence National Indicators:

NI32: Repeat incidents of domestic violence (a key local indicator included in the newly agreed Local Area Agreement)

NI34: Domestic violence – murder

Social Inclusion and Diversity:

Domestic violence disproportionately affects women and children. We uphold the assertion that by improving our response to domestic violence we will have a positive impact upon the health, wellbeing and potential of women and children.

This Strategy recognises that domestic violence can affect anyone regardless of social or economic position, race, culture, gender, age, disability and sexual orientation. Therefore it has been developed to ensure that the needs of all our communities are adequately met. It will also contribute to the Every Child Matters outcomes by increasing children and young people's potential to be healthy, to stay safe, to enjoy and achieve, and to make a positive contribution.

The Strategy is committed to lowering social tolerance of domestic violence through cultivating community awareness and knowledge of support agencies. It is built upon an acknowledgement that domestic violence is unacceptable and a violation of human rights. This commitment will reinforce community cohesion around the issue, underlined through regular reporting to the Inclusion sub-group of the Local Strategic Partnership.

As specific recommendations within the Strategy are developed into specific projects, each will be accompanied by an Equality Impact Assessment, with a view to collating these into the first year review of the Strategy.

Crime and Disorder:

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a responsibility on local authorities to consider the crime and disorder implications of any proposals. Domestic violence is a crime and this Strategy has evolved from, and fits within, the strategic priorities of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board. Indeed, with serious violent crime now a key target under the new Local Area Agreement, robust measures to address domestic violence are critical to the success of the Safer and Stronger programme.

The provision of domestic violence services will contribute to the reduction of crime against victims of domestic violence and improve community safety. The Strategy will drive all agencies to recognise their unique contribution to identifying, reporting and responding appropriately to victims of domestic violence and their children, and to perpetrators of domestic violence. In respect of the Council's activities, there is a strong emphasis in the Strategy on improving the response provided by frontline services as part of their

mainstream responsibilities, such improvements being an essential part of corporate improvements against Section 17 compliance.

Options Appraisal:

No options appraisal required.

Contact Officer: Emma Gray	Title: Domestic Violence and Hate Crime Team Manager	Contact Details: Tel: 020 8227 2809 Fax: 020 8227 2846 E-mail: emma.gray@lbbd.gov.uk
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1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 This is the first domestic violence Strategy for the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. It is a three-year multi-agency Strategy which will be implemented through a strategic sub-group of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board. This sub-group will be chaired by the borough Superintendent and facilitated by the LBB Community Safety and Neighbourhood Service.
- 1.2 Domestic violence has historically been seen as a private issue, and it is this assumption that has enabled those who abuse to remain unchallenged and those who are victimised to remain isolated. This Strategy demonstrates our local commitment to rectifying this by placing domestic violence squarely into a public strategic framework, which recognises that domestic violence has far reaching consequences for victims, their children, and the wider community.
- 1.3 This Strategy sets out a vision for effectively addressing the issue of domestic violence and details the specific steps that will be taken to achieve this.
- 1.4 In recognition of the gravity of domestic violence, our strategic aim is to reduce the incidence of domestic violence, and to prevent domestic violence related homicides in Barking and Dagenham.
- 1.5 Work is focussed under six key themes:
 - To increase safe choices for victims and their children experiencing domestic violence.
 - To hold perpetrators accountable for their abusive behaviour.
 - To raise awareness of domestic violence in the borough through public education – to ensure domestic violence is not tolerated, and assist in increasing reporting.
 - To educate children and young people as to the impact and effects of domestic violence.
 - To ensure domestic violence is a high priority among practitioners, through effective leadership and an effective allocation of resources and improved efficiency.
 - To provide survivors with the necessary after care so that they can successfully rebuild their lives.

2. Current Position

- 2.1 The drivers for this Strategy and for the work that it describes are, in summary:

- Gender inequality – domestic violence is the type of violence women are most likely to experience.
- Murder suppression – two women a week are murdered by their partner or ex-partner in England and Wales.
- Volume violent crime – Barking and Dagenham Police recorded 3,733 incidents of domestic violence from April 2007 to March 2008.
- Social impact – affects an estimated one in four women at some point in their adult lifetimes, and around one in thirteen adult men.
- Disproportionate level – in 2005/06, Barking and Dagenham recorded the highest number of domestic violence incidents per 1,000 of the population of all London boroughs.
- Business case – domestic violence costs Barking and Dagenham approximately £82 million every year¹:

Costs	£ million
Criminal justice	3.66
Health care – physical	4.39
Mental health	0.63
Social services	0.82
Housing and refuges	0.57
Civil legal costs	1.12
<i>All services costs (Sub Total)</i>	<i>11.19</i>
Employment	9.62
Human	61.54
Total cost	82.35

Much of the money we currently spend does not, on the whole, make women and children safer; nor does it hold abusive men accountable or reduce social tolerance either amongst the general public or amongst children and young people. It should be noted that the services which do the most to increase safety are also likely to be inadequately and insecurely funded. It is our shared view that if greater emphasis is placed on the quality and effectiveness of interventions we can decrease repeat victimisation and dramatically decrease the costs to the public purses in the long term.

3. Report Detail

- 3.1 To increase safe choices for victims and their children experiencing domestic violence, the broad thrust is to improve the connections between services, to train front line staff and improve our handling of data and to expand housing options and associated support. Specifically, recommendations include:

¹ Estimates are based on 'The Cost of Domestic Violence' (Sylvia Walby, University of Leeds for the Women and Equality Unit, 2004, www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/research/cost_of_dv_Report_sept04.pdf). The total cost of domestic violence in England and Wales from this study has been apportioned to the borough solely according to its share of the England and Wales all ages population from the 2005 mid-year estimates. The costs have been up-rated to 2007-08 prices, using the HM Treasury GDP deflators (28/09/2006 Report).

- Increasing housing options and floating support.
- Improving joined up initial response, e.g. the Domestic Violence Emergency Response Team (DVERT).
- Improving access for those with complex needs.
- Greater coordination across the various public protection mechanisms.
- Improving service access and increased service user consultation.
- Publicity of specialist services across sectors.
- Improved recording and data collection.
- Commitment to training across agencies.

3.2 To hold perpetrators accountable for their abusive behaviour, we will be looking at improving the response of the criminal justice system and reviewing how the Council manages tenancies where domestic violence is a feature. Specific recommendations include:

- Increasing the numbers of domestic violence perpetrators brought to justice while safeguarding victims: pre-charge; charge; post-charge and sentencing.
- Cultivating awareness of the east London Domestic Violence Intervention Project perpetrator programme.
- Improved victim focus of the criminal justice process.
- Eviction of perpetrators who breach tenancy clause on perpetrating domestic violence.

3.3 To raise awareness of domestic violence in the borough through public education, in order that there is reduced tolerance and increased reporting, we will look at campaigns and community outreach, with the specific recommendations being written up as:

- Programme of community outreach to educate and raise awareness.
- Joint agency publicity campaigns.

3.4 To educate children and young people as to the impact and effects of domestic violence, we will need to take both a universal and targeted approach, with the specific recommendations being:

- Prevention work in schools and in non-school settings with children and young people.
- Therapeutic programme(s) for children and non-abusing parent.

3.5 To ensure domestic violence is a high priority among practitioners, through effective leadership and an effective allocation of resources and improved efficiency, we will focus on data, policy development and appropriately aimed training. Specific recommendations include:

- Local strategic infrastructure.
- All agencies to have a domestic violence policy.
- Domestic violence policies and protocols.
- Data collection system.
- Domestic violence to be mainstreamed in cross-cutting strategies.
- Tiered multi-agency training.

3.6 To provide survivors with the necessary after care so that they can successfully rebuild their lives, we have perhaps the greatest distance to travel, with relatively few structured services in place. Therefore, the recommendations include:

- Service gap analysis of current provision.

- Development of proposed interventions needed.
- Implementation of interventions.

4. Targets and Outcomes

The Strategy will be measured against the following targets:

- National Indicator 32 repeat incidents of domestic violence
 - baseline and target to be established (March 2009)
- National Indicator 34 domestic violence homicide
 - baseline and target to be established (March 2009)
- Police Sanction Detection Rate for domestic violence crimes:
 - Current annual target (2008/09): 50%
- Police Arrest Rate for domestic violence crimes:
 - Current annual target (2008/09): 67.6%
- Baseline, outcomes and targets will be set for each of the projects as they are developed.

5. Implications

5.1 Options appraisal:

No options appraisal required.

The Strategy has been developed in line with the Second London Domestic Violence Strategy, which is recognised to have resulted in a 57% reduction in domestic violence murders in London, against an upwards national trend. The only adaptation we have chosen to make is adding two further priorities: improving organisations' and professionals' responses, and providing survivors with the necessary after care so that they can successfully rebuild their lives.

6. Consultees

6.1 The following were consulted in the preparation of this report:

- Cllr Valerie Rush (Stronger Communities and Safer Neighbourhoods, including equalities)
- LBBDD Domestic Violence and Hate Crime Team
- Departmental Head of Finance
- Legal Services
- Anne Bristow and Adult and Community Services Departmental Management Team

7. Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:

- Second London Domestic Violence Strategy