

## CABINET

15 February 2021

<b>Title:</b> Independent Barking and Dagenham Domestic Abuse Commission Report	
<b>Report of the Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration and the Cabinet Member for Enforcement and Community Safety</b>	
<b>Open Report</b>	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Wards Affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> No
<b>Report Author:</b> Florence Henry, Domestic Abuse Commission Programme Manager	<b>Contact Details:</b> E-mail: <a href="mailto:florence.henry@lbbd.gov.uk">florence.henry@lbbd.gov.uk</a>
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Mark Tyson, Director of Strategy and Participation	
<b>Summary</b> <p>Domestic abuse has been an issue for too long in Barking and Dagenham. The council has consistently had the highest police reported rates of domestic abuse in London, with national evidence showing that large amounts of domestic abuse goes unreported to the police. A 2017 and 2019 school survey of over 2000 Barking and students found that 26% of year 10 to year 12 students thought it was sometimes acceptable to hit your partner. In January 2019 at the East Borough Command Unit Serious Violence Summit, Councillor Maureen Worby, Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care announced the plan to launch a domestic abuse commission.</p> <p>In September 2019, the Barking and Dagenham Domestic Abuse Commission launched at Eastbury Manor House. The commission brings together a panel of national experts chaired by Polly Neate, CEO of Shelter to look at the attitudes in the borough related to domestic abuse. The commission also had a national launch at City Hall on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2020, where Jess Phillips MP and Sophie Linden, Deputy Mayor for Crime and Policing, spoke along with commissioners and Cabinet Members. The commission is the first of its kind in the country.</p> <p>The commission has conducted a range of qualitative and quantitative insight in the borough with residents and professionals. In particular, survivors of domestic abuse have co-produced the report and the outcomes, and recommendations within it. The report is structured as 7 survivor-based outcomes with a series of recommendations below each of these recommendations. Involving survivors of domestic abuse in any approach is one of the commission's key recommendations. The report also contains photos of people holding up 'We Believe You' signs – the commission recommends that We Believe You is a key message, and that culture change to ensure that survivors are believed takes place.</p>	
<b>Recommendation(s)</b> <p>The Cabinet is recommended to:</p>	

- (i) Agree to the publication of the Independent Domestic Abuse Commission Report, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report; and
- (ii) Note that the Council's formal response to the Commission, outlining how it intends to respond to the Commission's recommendations, shall be presented to a future meeting of the Cabinet for approval.

### **Reason(s)**

Domestic abuse is one of the council's 'five giants', as outlined in the 2020-2022 Corporate Plan – it is one of the five cross-cutting issues which the council must try new approaches to address. The commission report provides recommendations of how the borough should respond to domestic abuse, and is the first report of its kind in the country.

Domestic abuse falls under the strategic priority of Prevention, Independence and Resilience – improving the understand of and response to domestic abuse will enable children, families and adults in Barking and Dagenham to live safe, happy, healthy and independent lives.

## **1. Introduction and Background**

- 1.1 Barking and Dagenham has had the highest police-reported rates of domestic abuse in London. In addition to this, a school survey in 2017 and 2019 found that 26% of Barking and Dagenham young people in years 10 to 12 thought it was sometimes acceptable to hit your partner. Domestic abuse is a priority for Barking and Dagenham, and at the East Borough Command Unit in January 2019, Councillor Worby, Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration, announced her intention to launch a domestic abuse.
- 1.2 The Barking and Dagenham Domestic Abuse Commission was launched in September 2019 at Eastbury Manor House, with all members invited. The commission brings together a panel of 12 national experts, chaired by Polly Neate CBE, CEO of Shelter and former CEO of Women's Aid. The commission was given three tasks – to look at the community attitudes towards domestic abuse, to look at the response of the council and partners and to provide a toolkit for others to follow. The commission's independent experts are as below:
  - Polly Neate (Chair) - CEO of Shelter, former CEO of Women's Aid
  - Simon Blake - Chief Executive of Mental Health First Aid and is also Deputy Chair of Stonewall
  - Amna Adbullatif - Community psychologist who is currently working as national lead on children and young people for Women's Aid
  - Nicki Norman - Director of Services Women's Aid
  - Junior Smart - Founder of SOS Project, Director of SmartCC
  - Becky Rogerson - Chief executive at My Sister's Place and acting Director at Wearside Women in Need
  - Sarah Hughes - CEO of Centre for Mental Health
  - Raji Hunjan – Director of Housing and Homelessness at Oak Foundation
  - Jo Todd - CEO of Respect

- Jess Phillips - MP of Birmingham Yardley, Chair of APPG on Domestic Violence and Abuse
- Rick Henderson - CEO of Homeless Link

1.3 Importantly, as well as the national commissioners, a Borough Expert Panel chaired by Councillor Maureen Worby, provided local insight on the borough and links to key members of the community which was invaluable through-out the commission's work.

1.4 This report contains the independent commission's report and recommendations. Separately, the council's response to the commission is being formulated and will be coming to Cabinet and Assembly later in the year. This will outline how the council is responding to the commission's recommendations, and have full details of impacts on options appraisals, financial implications and any impact on the impact on staff.

## **2. Proposal and Issues**

2.1 The commission's report has been co-produced with survivors of domestic abuse. The commission recruited a survivors panel to gain qualitative insight about their lived experience of domestic and its outcomes –the survivors' panel took place monthly in person from November 2019 to March 2020, and twice weekly since March 2020. The rich insight gained from survivors of domestic abuse is embedded through-out the report.

2.2 The commission is holding a virtual launch event for the report in March 2021. This will build on the launch event for the commission at City Hall on 4 February 2020 and bring together those in the domestic abuse and local government sector to promote the report as the first of its kind in the country, and its findings. The council is also planning a series of learning events to share with our local authorities the commission's findings, and process.

2.3 The commission has structured its report as 7 outcomes which outline what life should be like for survivors of domestic abuse in the borough, and within each of the outcomes are a series of recommendations which have been co-produced with survivors of domestic abuse. The 7 outcome chapters within the report are as below:

1. Outcome 1 - Professionals and services
2. Outcome 2 – Healthy relationships and young people
3. Outcome 3 – Trauma informed
4. Outcome 4 – Community awareness
5. Outcome 5 – Perpetrators and challenging abusive behaviours
6. Outcome 6 – Community groups and community spaces
7. Outcome 7 - Child survivors of domestic abuse

2.4 Each chapter begins with the qualitative insight gained from survivors of domestic abuse – this highlights what survivors of domestic abuse have told the commission about this area, and why it is important. The survivor quotes are embedded through-out the text. Each chapter also outlines what Barking and Dagenham have already done in this area, and then outlines a series of recommendations as 'steps' which build on what Barking and Dagenham has already done in relation to

domestic abuse. This reflects that Barking and Dagenham is already on a journey in relation to domestic abuse. The commission also has a chapter on 'Domestic Abuse in Barking and Dagenham Now' which provides an overview of the work the borough has already done to tackle domestic abuse.

- 2.5 It was very important to ensure that the commission reflects the borough's cultural diversity, and was acknowledged that a 'one size fits all' approach to domestic abuse would not work. For this reason, commission's report also has a chapter on culture and communities which breaks down the nuances between the qualitative insight heard from the different communities in the borough – domestic abuse is a problem for all communities but there are some nuances that the commission has outlined.

### **3. Options Appraisal**

- 3.1 This report contains the independent commission's report, and not the council response to it and therefore does not include an options appraisal. The council's response to the Commission's findings will be presented to the Assembly later in the year – this will contain an options appraisal for the council's response to the commission's recommendations, and the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

### **4. Consultation**

- 4.1 The commission has consulted with over 500 residents and staff through the process of its work, with the report detailing this consultation. In particular, the commission's report and recommendations have been co-produced with survivors of domestic abuse. Engagement with survivors of domestic abuse took place monthly before the pandemic, and since March has taken place twice weekly virtually. The voices of survivors are key through-out the report narrative and recommendations within the report.
- 4.2 As the lead Member for the Commission, Councillor Worby has been regularly updated on the commission's report and had regular meetings with the chair of the commission. In addition to this, updates on the report have also been given also been given regularly at Member forums, and partnership boards such as Health and Wellbeing Board and Community Safety Partnership.

#### Consultation of commission report:

Triggers meeting – 14<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Corporate Strategy Group – 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Prevention Independence and Resilience Member Group – 26<sup>th</sup> January

- 4.3 This report was considered and approved by the Corporate Strategy Group at its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020, where the chair of the commission, Polly Neate presented the report. The report was also considered by the Prevention Independence and Resilience Member Group on 26<sup>th</sup> January, where Polly Neate presented the report, and it was approved for submission to Cabinet.

## 5. Financial Implications

Implications completed by: Sandra Pillinger Group Accountant

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications of this report as it concerns publication of the report of the Domestic Abuse Commission. There may be financial implications from the council's response to the report's recommendations when this is brought to Cabinet later in the year.

## 6. Legal Implications

Implications completed by: Lindsey Marks, Deputy Head of Law.

- 6.1 The Domestic Abuse Bill 2020/2021 attempts to further develop awareness and understanding of domestic abuse by providing a wider definition of what domestic abuse is. The Bill proposes a new legal duty on local authorities to deliver accommodation-based support to victims of domestic abuse and their children. The Bill also creates the new Domestic Abuse Commissioner role to help drive consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse across all local areas and agencies.
- 6.2 The Domestic Abuse Bill has its second reading in the House of Lords in early January 2021 and was committed to a committee of the whole house.

## 7. Other Implications

- 7.1. **Staffing Issues** – Staff have been very engaged with the work of the commission since it was launched. Polly Neate CBE, Chair of the commission, spoke at the Top 400 managers' event in November 2019 which was well received by staff. Some staff have also volunteered to support the commission's engagement activities, and the commission has ensured it has spoken to staff and professionals, as well as residents in its consultation and focus groups. A series of questions on domestic abuse were included in the Staff temperature check survey for the first time in 2020, and insight from this was provided to commissioners.

The specific impacts on staff of the commission's recommendations and any consultation with staff and unions, will be worked through as part of the council's response to the commission later in the year. It is not currently clear how the council will take on board the recommendations, and therefore any staffing issues will be outlined in the council response.

- 7.2 **Corporate Policy and Equality Impact** – In the 2020 – 2022 Corporate Plan, Domestic abuse is outlined as Barking and Dagenham's 'five giants' – the five key cross-cutting key issues and priorities which Barking and Dagenham will focus on to create change in relation to these issues or outcomes. Domestic abuse falls within Prevention, Independence and Resilience

A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for this proposal, and is attached as an appendix to this report (Appendix 2). The commission acknowledges that domestic abuse happens to both genders, but sees it as a gendered crime which is backed up by both national and local evidence which shows that domestic

abuse disproportionately impacts women – MOPAC data highlights 78% of police-reported victims of domestic abuse were female.

The commission has been keen to ensure that its evidence has been representative of the different equality groups in the borough, and to ensure . The commission's report has a chapter on cultures and communities – this chapter goes through different insight gained from different communities which make up Barking and Dagenham's diverse population. The commission is clear to highlight that there is no evidence domestic abuse happens more specific races or religions - domestic abuse happens in all cultures and communities, and the commission concludes that there is a need to make domestic abuse more visible in all cultures, and ensure that communities are not "othered".

The commission has also engaged with the LGBTQ+ community around domestic abuse and has found that there are additional barriers to disclosing domestic abuse. The commission recommends further engagement with the LGBTQ+ community to ensure that their lived experience of domestic abuse is heard. One of the commission's key recommendations is to ensure that a diverse group of survivors of domestic abuse play a key role in the council's approach moving forward.

- 7.3 **Safeguarding Adults and Children** - Domestic abuse is a key safeguarding issue – of children who are in touch with children's social care, local and national data shows that domestic abuse is a common feature. Domestic abuse was a factor in 26% of assessments on children under 5 carried out by children's care and support. Living in a home where domestic abuse can have an impact on a child or young person's mental and physical wellbeing, their behaviour and their development. The new domestic abuse bill which is due for Royal Assent shortly, names children who witness domestic abuse as child survivors in their own right.

The borough has been on a journey with domestic abuse, in particular in the last 18 months – the borough's work to date on domestic abuse is listed in the commission's report, including adopting the Safe and Together model within children's social care, the introduction of a perpetrator intervention programme and the Refuge Domestic and Sexual Violence service contract from October 2019 onwards.

The commission's recommendations focus on improving outcomes for survivors of domestic abuse in 7 key areas – all of which would improve outcomes for survivors and their families. One of the commission's outcomes focuses directly on child survivors of domestic abuse, and recommends increasing the capacity of tailored interventions for child survivors of domestic abuse which would have a positive impact on children in the borough.

- 7.4 **Health Issues** – Domestic abuse can have a negative impact on the victim's health, in particular mental health. There can be huge trauma-impacts as a consequence of domestic abuse which are well evidenced. In addition to this, the physical consequences of abuse can cause victims of domestic abuse to seek medical attention. Health partners have a key role to play in tackling domestic abuse with national evidence showing that GP practices have a key role to play in dealing with disclosures. The report's recommendations include recommendations for health partners – there is also an outcome within the report on trauma-informed, focusing on the impact that trauma has on survivors of domestic abuse.

## **7.5 Crime and Disorder Issues -**

The Community Safety Partnership Action plan details tackling violence against women and girls as one of its priority, in particular supporting survivors, educating and communicating, challenging abusive behaviours and including lived experience. Domestic abuse happens to both genders, but disproportionately affects women and girls. The commission's report is focused on improving outcomes for survivors, and has been co-produced with survivors of domestic abuse's lived experiences. The commission's recommendations also contain recommendations relating to challenging abusive behaviours and educating and communicating.

**Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report: None**

### **List of appendices:**

**Appendix 1 – Independent Domestic Abuse Commission Report**

**Appendix 2 - Equality Impact Assessment**