

CABINET

25 May 2021

Title: Independent Domestic Abuse Commission Report – Initial Response	
Report of the Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration	
Open Report	For Decision
Wards Affected: All	Key Decision: No
Report Author: Hazel North Stephens, Lead Commissioner (Community Safeguarding)	Contact Details: E-mail: hazel.northstephens@lbbd.gov.uk
Accountable Director: Chris Bush, Commissioning Director, Children and Adults	
Accountable Strategic Leadership Director: Elaine Allegretti, Strategic Director, Children and Adults	
Summary At its meeting on 15 February 2021 (Minute 78 refers), the Cabinet received the Independent Barking & Dagenham Domestic Abuse Commission’s report (DAC report) which was followed up by a formal online launch event on 10 March 2021. This paper acknowledges the importance and value the DAC report brings to the borough and sets out the Council initial response to the DAC’s recommendations and the next steps towards the development of a five-year delivery plan.	
Recommendation(s) The Cabinet is recommended to approve the Council’s initial response to the Domestic Abuse Commission’s recommendations, as detailed in the report.	
Reason(s) To assist the Council in achieving its strategic priority of ‘Prevention, Independence and Resilience’ in relation to combatting domestic abuse in the Borough, as outlined in the 2020-2022 Corporate Plan.	

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Following on from the publishing of the LBB D Domestic Abuse Commission report, the Council will re-focus its efforts to respond to the recommendations that it sets out alongside the development of a whole system approach to domestic abuse.
- 1.2. Some recommendations will be able to be adapted to quickly with the right resources in place, and some recommendations will need longer multi-agency planning response.

- 1.3. This paper sets out the Council's view as to next steps to start developing and embedding some of the recommendations and will describe the coordination of a multi-agency partnership response.

2. The Domestic Abuse Commission (DAC) Report

- 2.1. The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health integration launched a commission in Feb 2020, chaired by Polly Neate CBE, to bring together the thinking of 12 national experts to look at the attitudes in the borough to domestic abuse, the council's response to domestic abuse and to create a blueprint for other authorities to follow.
- 2.2. The Commission undertook significant engagement work with residents and stakeholders across the system and presented its findings in a final report. The report can be found at <https://modgov.lbbd.gov.uk/internet/documents/s143521/DA%20Commission%20-%20App%201.pdf>.
- 2.3. Barking and Dagenham Council fully appreciate the importance of the report, the intense amount of work that has gone into it and the opportunity that it now presents us with. The report is one of national significance, signalling to local government across the country how they can make a genuine difference to tackle the normalisation of domestic abuse, and manage its impacts.
- 2.4. It goes beyond the veneer that service improvement alone can tackle one of society's most egregious human rights issues and recognises the power of our people to drive change forwards.
- 2.5. The Council agrees with the report that there are significant areas of progress to be undertaken over the coming years and accepts that the recommendations have been formed in such a way as to embed change over a five-year period.
- 2.6. The Council wants to thank Polly Neate CBE and each of the commissioners for their time, expertise, and passion over the 18 months that the learning took place. The Council also thanks the Programme Lead and Community Engagement Officer who undertook much of the work at a local level and recognises the efforts of the local Borough Expert Panel's contributions in rooting the recommendations in local nuance.

3. DAC Report Recommendations

- 3.1. The Council appreciates that as a long-term issue, domestic abuse requires a long-term response, and the DAC report suggests recommendations to be delivered across five years to improve systems, practice and process, and to embed core direct service delivery.
- 3.2. Therefore, we are setting out the initial steps in broad terms that we will take to start us on the journey to embed those recommendations and the principles behind them. There is no doubt that investment will be required but we understand a delivery plan is required first.

- 3.3. This initial response paper has been discussed at Corporate Strategy Group, PIR Members Group and the DA Commission Programme Lead undertook an All Members Briefing on 8 March 2021. This is to ensure all members are briefed on the recommendations as well as to ensure different stakeholders can add to the ongoing conversation around taking the recommendations forwards.
- 3.4. All recommendations are, ultimately, understood and accepted by the Council although there is one that has been considered and is not found to be achievable in a way that resource versus outcomes is proportionate (Outcome 3, Step 3). However, the principles behind the recommendation are clearly understood, and we will be able to develop the recommendation whilst remaining true to the core principles of the outcome.
- 3.5. The Council also respects and is wholeheartedly on board with the recommendation that our response must be aligned to the borough's survivors. They provide insight into lived experience and bring valuable nuance to discussion that help shape service design and delivery. The Council also has a moral duty to ensure that survivors are centred at every part of its decision-making processes and is fully committed to ensuring survivors are not only consulted but are helped and supported to be able to provide continuing input.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1. Many of the recommendations are deliverable with additional staff time, and some of them will be difficult to embed without more staff resource as the recommendations are not just a case of additional commissioned resources. The work requires significant internal work too. We are looking to take a two phased approach to embedding the principles and recommendations:

Phase One: Priming the system

- 4.2. We will prime our initial response with staff resource who will both coordinate and deliver against the recommendations that we can move with swiftly, embedding change whilst giving time to test current funding and build the proposal for additional funding going forwards.
- 4.3. The posts will embed the DA Impact Assessment work and internal change work and continue with the training coordination and delivery that has been built up through domestic abuse housing alliance efforts and internal approaches but shaping it to be whole system deliverable.
- 4.4. Their focus will be on system change and development as taking on caseloads will create difficulties with workloads. This will allow us to meet several of the recommendations that are not focused on direct support, including building a training and communications plan, building community champions approaches utilising learning from the Change that Lasts, and coordinating the system change.

Phase 2: Realising Change

- 4.5. The Commissioning team will lead on the ongoing coordination of a new strategic group – the Barking and Dagenham Against Domestic Abuse (BDADA) - who will be

responsible for creating a 5-year delivery framework against the recommendations and driving forwards the agenda across the whole system.

- 4.6. The group will explore resources required behind each recommendation, weight the importance of the recommendations against deliverables and will create a five-year plan of action rooted in the principles and outcomes set by the DAC Report. This is where the space for shaping direct delivery will come in – looking at how we improve the offer for young people who need therapeutic recovery services or finding sustainability for perpetrator work for example.
- 4.7. The partnership will not just help shape the system but prime it, seeking out good ideas from the frontline and feeding back to decision makers opportunities for changes that support the recommendations from the commission.
- 4.8. The partnership group will be responsible for decision making and for seeking ongoing funding and/or resources to ensure delivery against recommendations is maximised.
- 4.9. The group will require partners at a senior management level from the following areas:

Organisation	Service area
LBBD	Commissioning
	Children's Care and Support
	Adult's Care and Support
	Education
	Policy and Participation
	Community Solutions
	Community Safety & Enforcement
	Human Resources
Police	Response
	Safeguarding
	Neighbourhoods
Health	Mental Health
	Children's 0-19 Contract
	BHRUT - Safeguarding
	CCG – Safeguarding & General Practice
Probation	National Probation Service
	Community rehabilitation Centre
Commissioned Services	Refuge
	Victim Support
	Cranstoun
	CGL
	WDP
Voluntary Sector	BD Collective

- 4.10. The plan is to use 2021/22 to coordinate the delivery efforts, making changes where possible utilising existing resources such as Cranstoun delivering training around perpetrators for example, and the additional coordination resource. This would allow us to have a good understanding of funding required across the five years and would allow for funds to be identified to start embedding the wider direct-service deliverables from 2022.

5. Positive Change

5.1. This is an exciting time for Barking and Dagenham. Through the vital work of the Domestic Abuse Commission in 2019/20, the path is set for 2021/22. Phase one has already started through the following pieces of work:

- The MARAC Coordinator has completed training nearly 500 managers across the organisation and will be shifting her capacity as it eases towards the ongoing coordination of the survivor panel, working with local groups to ensure survivors are empowered to be a part of the change and to help us steer forwards. We are fully taking on board the importance of working with survivors to improve our responses.
- We are extending the Domestic Abuse Housing Coordinator post using funds from the Home Office to help prepare us for the upcoming Domestic Abuse Bill obligations (heavily focused in the housing space). We will utilise some of the post's capacity for building the Domestic Abuse Impact Assessment work – building domestic abuse into every decision made across the Council.
- The Lead Commissioner, alongside partners, has undertaken a review of the MARAC and identified areas of change that complement the recommendations in the DAC Report. Children's Care and Support are leading on a daily risk management meeting for example, which will ensure a quicker response to high-risk referrals coming through from police. Initial feedback is showing that the relationship with Health has improved massively, and particularly in relation to CAMHS.
- The Domestic Abuse Commission Programme Lead is bringing the report and its recommendations to the partnership boards to ensure the learning is shared and understood and to give partners the clear expectation that the Council will be lobbying for change across a range of institutions. For example, the recommendations set out encouraging partners to ensure they undertake domestic abuse training, and so the Council will be lobbying health and crime commissioners to ensure this is prioritised.
- Domestic Abuse is already named as one of our five giants within the corporate plan, but it is also being written into the developing 4 year plan as a key focus for the Council, and this will ensure that the work is embedded across all areas of work going forwards.
- Safe and Together, a model approach to children's social care and domestic abuse response, has been delivered to 80 social workers, with feedback evidencing a shift in culture change and approach from those involved. There is appetite to build on this as part of the recommendations.
- The MARAC Coordinator has led on the development of DA Ambassadors – supportive points of contact for employees experiencing domestic abuse and this is being widely publicised across the organisation. The Ambassadors have created posters for spaces where people might not have access to digital platforms and have used a symbol created by local survivors within their signature lines and as their MS Teams avatars to mark themselves as safe

people to talk to. The symbol is a blossom tree - a symbol of hope and recovery.

6. Financial Implications

Implications completed by: Sandra Pillinger Group Accountant

- 6.1. There are no direct financial implications of this report as it concerns an initial response to the publication of the report of the Domestic Abuse Commission. There may be financial implications identified as the Council, alongside partners, develop a delivery plan.

7. Legal Implications

Implications completed by: Lindsey Marks, Deputy Head of Law

- 7.1. There are no direct legal implications within this report as it concerns an initial response to the publication of the report of the Domestic Abuse Commission, rather than a formal delivery plan.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1. **Staffing Issues** – Staff have been very engaged with the work of the commission, and there has been a large amount of operational delivery focused on staff alongside the Commission's research:
- We revised our Domestic Abuse Policy for employees in 2019, developing it to provide practical guidance on facilitating disclosures and offering paid leave for people experiencing domestic abuse who need time to move home, access specialist support services. This is also open to people who are using abusive behaviour where they are using the time to engage with perpetrator behaviour change programmes.
 - We signed up to the GMB Union's Domestic Abuse Charter as a significant national and workplace public commitment;
 - We were awarded Everyone's Business Award in January 2020 in recognition of our best practice approach. We were of the first 5 organisation to achieve it;
 - We have delivered awareness training to over 450 managers across our council services (499 anticipated by end of 2020/21);
 - We have built in staff support to our locally commissioned domestic and sexual violence service specification and ensured our perpetrator interventions were open to staff where there is no conflict of interest;
 - We have built in domestic abuse questions to our employee Health and Wellbeing Surveys;
 - We have a domestic abuse ambassador scheme made up of trained employee volunteers who are supportive points of contact that can offer emotional and practical guidance and facilitate access to specialist service provision. Led by

our MARAC coordinator, they come from different service areas. The Ambassadors have created posters for spaces where people might not have access to digital platforms and have used a symbol created by local survivors within their signature lines and as their MS Teams avatars to mark themselves as safe people to talk to. The symbol is a blossom tree - a symbol of hope and recovery;

- In 2020, we won the Best Organisational Development Initiative Award at the PPMA Excellence in People Management Awards for our approach to domestic abuse.

- 8.2. **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.
- 8.3. **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.
- 8.4. 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.
- 8.5. **Health Issues** – Domestic abuse can have a negative impact on the victim’s health, in particular mental health. There can be huge trauma-impacts because 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.
- 8.6. **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.

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

List of appendices: None