

SCRUTINY

REPORT OF THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

DATE: FEBRUARY 2012

Acknowledgements

Working Group

Councillor Liz McInnes (Chair)
Councillor Christine Gill
Councillor Brian Essex
Councillor Annabel Shipley
Councillor Tim Nuttall

Scrutiny Support

The Domestic Violence Task and Finish Group thanked Carolyn Sharples, Committee and Member Services Manager for producing the report on behalf of the Task and Finish Group.

Support from Officers of the Council

The task and finish group would like to thank the following officers for their contributions:

Cathy Lord, Housing and Partnership Manager
Rebecca Lawlor, Health, Housing and Regeneration Manager
Liz Sandiford, Head of People and Policy and Chair of the Children's Trust
Fiona Meechan, Director of Customer and Communities
Phil Seddon, Head of Finance and Property Services

Contribution of Evidence

The task and finish group would like to thank the following people for their contributions during this piece of work:

Debra Molyneaux, STAR Centre
Clare Boardman, Victim Support
Navin Kumar, East Lancashire Drug and Alcohol Team (DAAT)
Mandy Whittaker, Green Vale Homes
Frances Clarke, Green Vale Homes
Detective Inspector Derry Crokken, Pennine Division Public Protection Unit
Helen Gauder, East Lancashire Women's Refuge Association
Helene Cooper, Lancashire County Council Community Safety and Justice Coordinator

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------|------|
| Version Number: | 03 | Team: | C&MS |
| Date: | 15 th February 2012 | Issued: | |
| Approval Date: | | | 1 |

LIST OF THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

The Domestic Violence Task and Finish Group have made a number of recommendations which could have budget implications. Members understand that not all are likely to be achieved in light of the financial savings needed, but would make the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1

That the STAR Centre continues to work in partnership with the council to discuss finance issues, look at additional funding streams and identify match funding, and also works in partnership with other organisations to help sustain their service. That the STAR Centre also appoints more trustees to assist with the running of the centre and to assist with fundraising and promotion activities, which could in turn bring on board more volunteers.

Recommendation 2

That there is more joint working at a local level in relation to support for people who experience domestic abuse, e.g. STAR, Rossendale Council, Green Vale Homes, Police, etc., and that the Rossendale Domestic Abuse Partnership meets on a regular basis and is led by a relevant council officer.

Recommendation 3

That Rossendale Council and the STAR Centre develop a long term development plan and look at the long term delivery of the service in partnership with other agencies, and that they explore different delivery models at other authorities to inform future service developments and improvements.

Recommendation 4

That private landlords and housing associations fund security adaptations to their properties and work with partners to secure funding to support tenants who suffer domestic abuse.

Recommendation 5

That all partners work towards promoting help available to men who suffer domestic abuse.

Recommendation 6

That Green Vale Homes give consideration to informing tenants about domestic abuse services in their newsletter.

Recommendation 7

That Lancashire County Council continues to provide funding for domestic abuse, and provides preventative funding to reduce the costs of accident and emergency admissions and any required treatment, through its new role as a public health provider.

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------|------|
| Version Number: | 03 | Team: | C&MS |
| Date: | 15 th February 2012 | Issued: | |
| Approval Date: | | | 2 |

Recommendation 8

That Rossendale Borough Council revises its Domestic Abuse Policy to reflect domestic violence within minority groups including BME and disabled people, and that it mentions that services are available to minority groups.

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------|------|
| Version Number: | 03 | Team: | C&MS |
| Date: | 15 th February 2012 | Issued: | |
| Approval Date: | | | 3 |

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To outline the findings of the Domestic Violence Task and Finish Group in relation to the support to those suffering, or at risk of domestic violence in Rossendale.

2. Background

- 2.1 Overview and Scrutiny developed their work programme in June 2011 and a suggestion came from a councillor to review provision for people suffering, or at risk of domestic violence.
- 2.2 Prior to the start of the review the STAR Centre had approached Rossendale Council for financial support and the council had provided one-off payments to support staffing costs until funding was released.
- 2.3 In Rossendale, the STAR Centre is one of the organisations providing support to people suffering domestic abuse. However, the Star Centre is entirely dependent on grant funding and applies to the council and other partner agencies each year for funding.
- 2.4 It had been reported that referrals to the Star Centre were rising rapidly in line with the predicted patterns associated with recession. However, at the start of the review the STAR Centre had not been able to secure a sufficient amount of funding.
- 2.5 Local authorities had a statutory duty to make provisions for people suffering or at risk of domestic violence. However, members thought it was unclear what the requirements were, and how they were being fulfilled.
- 2.6 Members agreed that a review was urgently required and a task and finish group was established to look at domestic violence provision in the borough.

3. Terms of Reference

The overall terms of reference of the group were:

- To become familiar with the domestic violence strategies and partnership structures in Rossendale.
- To consider and assess the roles and responsibilities of the various organisations involved in addressing domestic violence including the Police.
- To seek information from neighbouring authorities on their position in relation to domestic violence.
- To examine the various referral and access mechanisms to specialist services and identify their effectiveness levels in reaching the widest possible target audience.
- To consider measures for dealing with domestic violence in minority groups, including BME communities and people with disabilities.

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------|------|
| Version Number: | 03 | Team: | C&MS |
| Date: | 15 th February 2012 | Issued: | |
| Approval Date: | | | 4 |

- To review costs, funding mechanisms, on a Rossendale wide basis and establish the value for money of domestic violence services in comparison to other local authorities.

4. Form of Investigation

4.1 Members met on 7th September and agreed the scope for the investigation.

4.2 In order to undertake the review members interviewed witnesses as follows:

29th September 2011

Debra Molyneux, STAR in Rossendale

Clare Boardman, Victim Support

13th October 2011

Fiona Meechan, Director of Customers and Communities

Liz Sandiford, Head of People and Policy and Chair of the Children's Trust

3rd November 2011

Navin Kumar, East Lancashire Drug and Alcohol Team

Cathy Lord, Housing and Partnership Manager

Rebecca Lawlor, Health, Housing and Regeneration Manager

5th January 2012

Detective Inspector Derry Crocken, Pennine Division Public Protection Unit

9th February 2012

Mandy Whittaker, Green Vale Homes

Fiona Meechan, Director of Customers and Communities

Phil Seddon, Head of Finance and Property Services

Rebecca Lawlor, Health, Housing and Regeneration Manager

4.3 Written information was also provided to the meeting held on 5th January 2012 by the following people:

Frances Clarke, Green Vales Homes

Helene Cooper, Lancashire County Council Community Safety and Justice Coordinator

4.4 Members undertook site visits to inform their research as follows:

12th October – STAR Centre

17th October – East Lancashire Women's Refuge

4.5 Desktop research was also undertaken to look at comparative information from other boroughs including Burnley and Pendle.

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------|------|
| Version Number: | 03 | Team: | C&MS |
| Date: | 15 th February 2012 | Issued: | |
| Approval Date: | | | 5 |

5. Findings

Various partners provided domestic violence statistics and there were many findings following the various presentations, interviews and site visits as follows:

5.1 Domestic Violence Statistics

National Statistics

- Women suffering domestic violence were two thirds more likely to turn to substance misuse (drugs or alcohol).
- Women suffering domestic violence were fifteen times more likely to misuse alcohol than women in general.
- Women reporting domestic violence were nine times more likely to misuse drugs.
- 42% of BME who seek treatment for alcohol misuse, experience domestic violence.
- Once into treatment for substance misuse and retained in treatment, there was a reduction in crime.
- Domestic violence was the fourth largest cause of homelessness.

Lancashire Statistics

- The number of domestic abuse arrests were on a par with the rest of Lancashire.
- Southern Division – Chorley/Leyland had a higher number of crimes per domestic violence incident. (35-40%).
- Blackpool had high incidents of domestic abuse and violence in general.

East Lancashire Statistics

- Between 1st April – 31st December there had been 4177 domestic abuse incidents within Pennine Division (Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale).
- During 2011 to date there have been 163 children supported through the refuge, 99 of which were 5 and under.
- The Independent Domestic Violence Advisory Service had supported 233 clients at high risk of serious harm or homicide (engaging with 95% of clients referred).
- There were about 2,000 clients in drug treatment and 600 in alcohol treatment in East Lancashire.

Rossendale Statistics

- There had been 911 domestic abuse incidents between 1st April – 31st December (including text message abuse or drive-by sightings).
- Domestic abuse incidents in Rossendale make up 22-23% of the Pennine area.
- For Rossendale there are 270 domestic abuse incidents where arrests will occur, out of these there have been 265 arrests (140 Rossendale East and 130 Rossendale West). The number of associated crimes is 138 East and 122 West.

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------|------|
| Version Number: | 03 | Team: | C&MS |
| Date: | 15 th February 2012 | Issued: | |
| Approval Date: | | | 6 |

- Sanction detections for domestic abuse are 73.2% Rossendale East and 74.6% Rossendale West (compared with the average 73.4%)
- Repeat domestic abuse rates for MARAC is 23% and the rate for the Police is 25% (see 5.5 for information on MARAC).
- In Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale there were twice as many domestic abuse incidents on Boxing Day compared with the average incidents per day for the rest of the year, but this was not unusual. Rossendale East had 15 and Rossendale West had 20.
- Compared with last year the number of domestic abuse incidents to date was about the same.
- There were more domestic abuse incidents reported at the weekend compared with during the week.
- On average a victim will have had 22 domestic abuse incidents before first reporting it, this includes emotional and psychological harm.
- There were 68 applications for re-housing in Rossendale with customers citing domestic violence as a reason.

STAR Centre Statistics

During 2010/11 the STAR Centre received 2268 calls which were broken down as follows:

- 105 from ethnic minorities
- 858 from service users
- 213 were first time callers
- 257 from children and young people
- 645 were repeat callers
- 1410 from agencies

5.2 STAR Centre

Debra Molyneux, Project Manager of STAR in Rossendale, attended the meeting on 29th September 2011 to update members on the service they provide in trying to keep people safe in the community. Statistics provided have been included in the information at 5.1.

The STAR Centre is a registered charity which was formed in 1996 and is the support agency in Rossendale for domestic abuse. It provides a co-ordinated approach to women and their families who are experiencing, or have experienced, domestic abuse. Whilst the centre is committed to supporting the safety and well being of women and children in the community, it also recognises that men can experience domestic violence and will refer them on to relevant services.

Domestic violence is the physical, emotional, sexual, mental or economical abuse of one person by another one with whom they had or have had a relationship. Rossendale has the highest number of high risk referrals, owing to factors such as alcohol, recession, etc.

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------|------|
| Version Number: | 03 | Team: | C&MS |
| Date: | 15 th February 2012 | Issued: | |
| Approval Date: | | | 7 |

Staff at the centre firmly believe there is something wrong if a person has to leave the area, and aim to keep people safe in the community. However, there are occasions where people have to go out of the area for numerous reasons. Out of 272 referrals to the service only 12 had to be moved into emergency accommodation. Over 50% of the referrals are high risk and at that point safety mechanisms are put in place to reduce risk.

The centre worked alongside the Police and the Public Protection Unit. Staff also worked with the Women’s Aid and Women’s Refuge, but due to the limited places available at the refuge some women out of the 12 had been moved out of the area.

The STAR Centre provided the following support and outreach services:

- Practical and emotional support for women, children and their families.
- Risk assessments, safety planning and packages.
- Specialised support and multi agency representation.
- Co-ordinated support packages tailored to each individual.
- Referrals to specialist agencies i.e. solicitors, refuges, Citizens Advice Bureau.
- Ethnic Community Support.
- Visiting women at safe locations throughout Rossendale.
- Working in partnership with appropriate agencies.
- Sanctuary and safety packages which include locks, panic alarms and personal attack alarms.
- Group work in Rossendale, where a variety of activities and courses are held.

Staff at the centre had a duty of care to provide security for their clients and the Sanctuary Scheme provided a safeguard to enable victims to remain in their own home. The Sanctuary Scheme helped make homes safer by installation of additional security on properties, such as lock changes, door bolts, spy holes, security lighting, etc. This service makes people feel safer in their own home and therefore prevents them having to seek alternative accommodation such as the refuge.

Members were given a financial update regarding the STAR Centre. The service had been existing ‘hand to mouth’ for the last 18-20 months, with no major funding last year. A bid for Big Lottery Funding (75% for the next 5 years) had been submitted (the outcome of which would be known by the end of October).

In 2010/11 the centre received the following funding:

- £20,000 from Children’s Trust (this funding is now going into prevention/intervention)
- £15,000 from Community Safety Partnership
- £8,000 from the Homelessness Grant

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------|------|
| Version Number: | 03 | Team: | C&MS |
| Date: | 15 th February 2012 | Issued: | |
| Approval Date: | | | 8 |

- £5,000 from Crisis Intervention funded from Police 2nd Homes

This year Lancashire County Council had requested £260,000 for the whole of Lancashire however it only received £40,000, of this STAR would receive £1,000 initially, then £2,800 per quarter. This year STAR had received £13,200 from Rossendale Council.

A member suggested that to assist the STAR Centre for their medium to long term future, Rossendale Council could look into the possibility of supporting the service via tenancy, as the council had lots of empty buildings. It was also suggested that the Head of Finance and Property Services meet with the STAR Centre to discuss funding. **(Recommendation 1)**

Members undertook a site visit to the STAR Centre on 12th October 2011 and discussed the findings at the meeting on 13th October 2011. Although members were impressed by the facilities available there were some concerns about the centre. It was felt that the Project Manager was under a great deal of pressure and was currently struggling to hold everything together. There was also concern about the pending lottery bid. Members hoped that the bid would be successful, however there was a feeling that there should be a back-up plan also. If the centre was unable to demonstrate sustainability then they would find it hard getting recognised by Lancashire County Council for funding.

Members noted that security and secrecy was essential for the STAR Centre. Members commented that the opening hours of the centre appeared to be office hours only, but domestic violence could occur at any time, particularly in the evenings or at weekends. However, they noted that there were 24 hour helpline numbers available in the centre's publicity material, and that outreach workers were available out of hours. It was recognised that the Star Centre was not a refuge centre but provided support and a safe, neutral venue for meetings with social workers and solicitors, etc. The centre also supports victims of domestic violence throughout court proceedings and members noted that this was a valuable service.

The centre relied heavily on volunteers but members were unsure how much time was given by volunteers and how much of the service was supplied by volunteers. To assist with the running of the centre members concluded that more trustees were required to provide team support and deflect the pressure from the Project Manager. **(Recommendation 1)** It was essential to fund-raise and this could be done whilst still preserving the confidentiality of the centre's location. This might also help with attracting more volunteers. Other funding streams needed to be identified and also other providers of similar services that could work together in partnership. **(Recommendations 1 and 2)** The recent meeting between council officers and the Star Centre was felt to be beneficial to all parties and also in keeping with working in partnership.

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------|------|
| Version Number: | 03 | Team: | C&MS |
| Date: | 15 th February 2012 | Issued: | |
| Approval Date: | | | 9 |

5.3 Victim Support

Clare Boardman (Services Delivery Manager), Victim Support, attended the meeting on 29th September 2011 to update members on the services provided by Victim Support. Victim Support provides emotional and practical support, advocacy, information and appropriate recognition to people affected by crime to help them deal with their experiences.

There are six Service Delivery Managers covering Lancashire. Owing to a reduction in funding, all staff are now based in Preston. Victim Support are in a unique position as we receive referrals direct from the Police. Crimes that have happened the day before are forwarded to the Victim Care Unit. This is the only organisation to get crimes in this way from the Police. The Victim Care Unit, located in Bootle, will phone the victim within 48 hours of the crime. Domestic violence and sexual abuse are given priority.

Support can be provided to victims before, during and after a court case. Referrals can be received from other agencies and they also accept self referrals. Following a risk assessment, the service provides emotional support in outreach resources or victims will be visited in their own homes if the risk is deemed low. Victim Support's Witness Service is present in all Magistrates and Crown Courts within Lancashire. The Witness Service will provide support to all victims, witnesses and their families during the trial process. They can arrange for pre-trial visit to be undertaken and arrange for victims and witnesses to enter the Courts by a separate entrance if they feel vulnerable or intimidated.

Victim Support will provide information about other services within the area and will refer people on to other agencies such as the STAR Centre. There is limited funding depending on eligibility for commissioning service for items such as basic security.

Members mentioned the possibility of Victim Support and the STAR Centre working in partnership. Victim Support could help assist with Sanctuary Scheme funding and STAR could offer Victim Support the use of a room for supporting local clients, and offering practical support including help with completing forms such as Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme.
(Recommendation 5)

The majority of the work is undertaken by volunteers who are from a variety of backgrounds, who have undergone extensive training. For more specialist crimes additional training is provided for Sexual Violence, Domestic Violence and Murder/Manslaughter

80% of Victim Support funding comes from the Home Office, whilst the rest is funding locally. Whilst domestic violence is high on the government agenda, no funding is attached to it.

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------|------|
| Version Number: | 03 | Team: | C&MS |
| Date: | 15 th February 2012 | Issued: | |
| Approval Date: | | | 10 |

5.4 Communities Team

The Director of Customers and Communities attended the meeting on 13th October 2011 to update members with regards to the funding and finance information for the STAR Centre. The Director of Customers and Communities had met with STAR and the Head of Finance and Property Services to look at the centre's finances. Although it appeared to be a good quality service, there were a few anomalies with outgoings and a further meeting had been arranged to assist with the finance and business operations of the centre.

The Director of Customers and Communities had spoken to the Police Authority and Community Safety Partnership regarding monies to support the work of the STAR Centre. The Police had £4k unallocated which was money available to the Community Safety Partnership to spend. Since the spending plan was first written in March/April the threats had shifted, therefore there were discussions taking place around whether the unallocated money could be spent more flexibly on the new priorities, particularly since violent crime had risen.

Week commencing 10th October 2011 £6k had been transferred to the STAR centre by means of a loan, which would need to be paid back on the success of the Big Lottery funding, as they had insufficient funds left. Members noted that some weeks the STAR centre had no activity, but then seemed to be swamped with activity. It was therefore difficult to predict when the service was needed.

Members commented that long term funding is going to be a recurrent issue and that the STAR Centre may need assistance with bid writing and identifying sources of funding. It would therefore benefit the centre to have trustees.
(Recommendation 1)

Rossendale Borough Council had a staff policy on domestic violence and a lot of awareness raising had been done through the bulletins, daily messages, Team Briefings, leaflets on notice boards and A4 sheets with the tear off slip helpline numbers. The web site displayed the helpline numbers, and there was a helpline number for men. With regards to statutory responsibilities, Home Office guidance was available in relation to how domestic violence services should be delivered, this included in partnership and by the third sector.

The Director of Customers and Communities clarified that she would be lobbying Lancashire County Council to be flexible and shift priorities where there were any unspent funds. There was a bigger risk of domestic violence at the moment (with the economic climate and an increase in alcohol consumption within the home) and therefore a need to respond flexibly.

There would be a need for discussion around sustainability going forward e.g. cost of accommodation and staff coverage and well as finances. However, the Head of Finance and Property Services would be continuing to work with STAR on the finances, and the Communities Team would also help STAR look for sources of funding. Members noted that this would be useful for the STAR

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------|------|
| Version Number: | 03 | Team: | C&MS |
| Date: | 15 th February 2012 | Issued: | |
| Approval Date: | | | 11 |

Centre and would assist with partnership working and alleviate pressure on the Project Manager. **(Recommendation 1)**

At present there were discussions around having a Pennine model of service delivery. It was noted that Ribble Valley for example, did not get any funding. It could therefore be possible to learn from similar organisations about how their services were delivered. **(Recommendation 3)**

5.5 Children's Trust

Liz Sandiford, Head of People and Policy attended the meeting on 13th October 2011 to provide information on what work the Children's Trust had been doing in relation to domestic violence. The Children's Trust had been in place for a number of years and was comprised of a board of partners from Police, education (high schools, primary schools), the Youth Service, Lancashire County Council, health, the college and children's centres. The Member Champion for Younger People from Rossendale Council and Lancashire County Councillor Winder also sat on the board. The board looked at priorities within the local area, and domestic violence had been on the agenda for a while but the former Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership had been leading on this. There had been prevention funding available last year, but this was no longer available. More recently it had been noted that domestic violence was on the increase in the area and the STAR Centre was under pressure.

In relation to victims of domestic violence, those presenting themselves without a child would be referred to the STAR centre, whilst those who presented themselves with a child aged 0-5 would be referred to the Children's Centre and the STAR Centre services. The Children's Trust had been exploring what would happen if there was no money or no capacity. This had revealed that agencies would signpost to other services such as Citizens Advice Bureau regarding benefit and debt advice and Rossendale Council's Homelessness Service.

The Head of People and Policy described how a multiagency approach to domestic violence was applied through the MARAC. MARAC stands for Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference. If someone was assessed as being at very high risk of domestic abuse, they would be referred to MARAC. Normally MARAC met monthly, however owing to the current high numbers it was meeting every fortnight. At these meetings information would be shared about very high risk clients in order to prevent serious harm, develop a safety plan, put all possible support in place and lower the risk as soon as possible.

The Head of People and Policy informed that gaps in service had been identified in relation to training for perpetrators and that domestic violence was on the increase and all agencies were under pressure.

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------|------|
| Version Number: | 03 | Team: | C&MS |
| Date: | 15 th February 2012 | Issued: | |
| Approval Date: | | | 12 |

Members noted that with third sector delivery there was no control or influence on how services were delivered in terms of best value. Appointing members as trustees would therefore be beneficial. **(Recommendation 1)**

5.6 East Lancashire Women's Refuge

Funding for the refuge came from Government Office North West and the Home Office with other sources of funding coming from Supporting People and Housing Benefit. There were seven trustees, but it could have up to twelve and they were currently recruiting more trustees.

The prime aim of the service was to provide a safe environment for women and their children so that they could move towards living a life free from violence and abuse. The refuge provided crisis intervention and whilst at the refuge women worked towards a support plan and could gain access to other services e.g. health.

Referrals to the service mainly came from the Police, Social Services and Housing, however, there were sometimes instances of self referrals. There was a telephone helpline at the refuge which could also offer support. Statistics provided have been included in the information at 5.1.

The Independent Domestic Violence Advisory Service had supported 233 clients at high risk of serious harm or homicide. This service offered short term crisis support to victims, working to reduce further incidents and increase safety through independent support.

The SafeNet Domestic Abuse Support Service had been running for 4 years and demand had increased dramatically during 2011. The helpline operates between 10am-5pm Monday to Friday and weekly domestic violence support surgeries were provided in children's centres and health centres around the borough.

Members noted that East Lancashire Women's Refuge Association is a long established charity which works right up to the budget. The charity is well integrated and undertakes fundraising activity. The refuge accommodation service is run by East Lancashire Women's Refuge Association, and the landlord is a registered social landlord, however, their involvement is only the upkeep of the building, not the delivery of the service. The refuge seemed to be doing a very good job and was in demand. Domestic violence support workers supported the individuals at the refuge and people worked together and supported each other as a team.

5.7 East Lancashire Drug and Alcohol Team

Navin Kumar of the East Lancashire Drug and Alcohol Team attended the meeting on 3rd November 2011 and informed members of the link between

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------|------|
| Version Number: | 03 | Team: | C&MS |
| Date: | 15 th February 2012 | Issued: | |
| Approval Date: | | | 13 |

domestic violence and drugs and alcohol. Statistics provided have been included in the information at 5.1.

For abusers or perpetrators of domestic violence there was a link with substance misuse and often this was used as a reason for violence. Alcohol was the most widely reported substance. The increase in domestic violence cases may be because services are more geared to offer support but there was still an increase in alcohol and drug use.

Services had been modernised in 2009. In East Lancashire and Rossendale stronger links were encouraged with domestic violence services. Referrals had changed: previously referrals were made from the GP or housing, but there was now an open access service where you could turn up anytime. There were emotional health teams and training was being provided for workforces to help them understand triggers. There were also various strategies and schemes which dealt with domestic violence e.g. 2004 Alcohol Harm Reduction, Tackling Violent Crime Programme, Safe Sensible Social: the Next Steps in the National Alcohol Strategy, Hidden Harm, 2010 National Drug Strategy.

There were a range of services available including community detox and rehabilitation. Inspire was responsible for integrating with domestic violence services. There was also Early Break, which was a flexible service which would go where demand was needed. Early Break was based in Nelson and worked across East Lancashire and Rochdale dealing with young people aged 10-21. At 21 there was a transitional protocol into adult services. There was a family based approach, which also looked into the impact of parents. Early Break worked out of partner offices, Inspire buildings and children's centres.

There was a clear link between domestic violence and substance misuse (drugs and alcohol), but the relationship was very complex, and there was a need for a more holistic approach. **(Recommendation 2)**

There was a possibility of funding support from the East Lancashire Drug and Alcohol Team for non-recurrent capital costs with regards to recurrent themes under Building Recovering Communities. Navin suggested meeting with council officers to discuss funding opportunities. Members agreed that working together to look at funding and service provision would be beneficial. **(Recommendation 2)**

5.8 Homelessness Service

Rebecca Lawlor, Health, Housing and Regeneration Manager and Cathy Lord, Housing and Partnership Manager attended the meeting on 3rd November 2011 to inform members about how domestic violence impacts on homeless service provision.

Domestic violence was the fourth largest cause of homelessness. There was a statutory duty regarding domestic violence under Housing and Homelessness

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------|------|
| Version Number: | 03 | Team: | C&MS |
| Date: | 15 th February 2012 | Issued: | |
| Approval Date: | | | 14 |

to provide safety and re-housing. However, many people want to stay in the local area, but this does not always solve the issue particularly for severe cases. There are however prevention options.

The Sanctuary Scheme provides safety measures for people to stay in their own homes e.g. locks, lighting, alarms, police contact etc. Occupation Orders can be used to remove perpetrators and keep the rest of the family in the home.

The STAR Centre was receiving funding from Rossendale Council's Homelessness and Communities Teams, which had been rolled together into a community grant and was the same value as the previous year. This included Sanctuary funding which STAR had control of for providing security measures within the borough. The Community Safety Partnership had also provided some Sanctuary funding.

Some of the security measures were undertaken on Housing Association properties. Housing Associations also had a duty regarding the safety of their tenants. However at present STAR were funding safety adjustments on Housing Association properties. **(Recommendation 4)**

Supporting People was a Lancashire County Council fund which supports accommodation such as safe houses and floating support (but it does not support care services). In cases where there was a severe risk, it was best to move people out of the borough and Supporting People would pay for the support. Rossendale did not have funding into safe houses but it did have part of the East Lancashire floating support through Sanctuary. STAR was not on the Supporting People framework, so it could not tender for these services, but Rossendale Council could. STAR had not had Supporting People funding in the past owing to capacity and evidencing sustainability, it would be four years before STAR would be able to apply again as the framework was closed for the next four years. The centre would therefore need to take advantage of any additional resources and East Lancashire contracts elsewhere.

Whilst STAR did not have access to Supporting People funding for accommodation, it could assist families with replacement accommodation and also provided referrals to the refuge. Members noted that when they visited the refuge they had not seen any families with older male children* and it only seemed to be catering for families with young children. Officers confirmed that this was a service provision gap that had been identified as not all women could access the refuge. In these instances safe houses would be beneficial. (*In relation to older male children, East Lancashire Women's Refuge Association confirmed that they catered for children of all ages and accepted boys up to the age of 15½ on the basis that a stay of 6 months is possible, and then legally, the older boy becomes a man. Referrals to the refuge from families with older children are considerably less common as older children often opt to stay with family or friends. East Lancashire Women's Refuge Association had recently opened a 'dispersed unit' with the specific intent of being able to offer safe

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------|------|
| Version Number: | 03 | Team: | C&MS |
| Date: | 15 th February 2012 | Issued: | |
| Approval Date: | | | 15 |

accommodation to families with older male children, as well as to other families where it was not possible to accommodate them in a communal setting i.e. those with alcohol or drug issues. East Lancashire Women's Refuge Association had successfully accommodated a family with 4 children, including a 16 year old boy, in that property).

Rossendale Council had secured Community Safety Partnership funding which could be used to pilot a safe house scheme. The STAR Centre was looking at supporting this scheme and work would begin to develop this as a pilot project over the coming months. This work would be beneficial in getting services to join together and provide evidence for the Audit Commission on how Rossendale was meeting its statutory duties. It was planned that there would be 2 safe houses to support a rolling programme. This would be decent temporary accommodation. The safe house model would be more appropriate and beneficial, particularly if people had been asked to leave a refuge owing to violence, or refused entry for substance misuse, or for women with older male children.

Officers noted that no one from the council had been invited to sit on the Domestic Violence Partnership, although it had been enquired about. Members also noted that three members were allocated to the partnership as representatives of Rossendale Council, but as yet they had never been invited to a meeting. **(Recommendation 2)**

5.9 Pennine Division Public Protection Unit

Detective Inspector Crokken attended the meeting on 5th January 2012 to inform members of the number of domestic abuse cases in Rossendale and provided comparisons with other areas. Statistics provided have been included in the information at 5.1.

Incidents were recorded as domestic abuse, which included abusive text messaging and drive-by sightings and were not just recorded on the basis of violence. At present the definition of domestic abuse was wide ranging and included brother/sister, father/son etc., and not just husband/wife or partners.

Domestic abuse had the highest detection rate for any crime type. In cases where the perpetrator went back to the family, there were no arrests, and sometimes there was no associated crime, for example, breach of the peace.

A Dash Risk Assessment was completed for every incident, and all agencies including STAR worked together on cases on a daily basis. MARAC also met every two weeks to discuss a multi agency approach to high risk cases. There were key times each year where incidents increased significantly, one of these occasions was Christmas Day, where incidents tend to start being reported after 3pm. In these instances alcohol is a major factor. Control is also a major factor where domestic abuse was concerned.

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------|------|
| Version Number: | 03 | Team: | C&MS |
| Date: | 15 th February 2012 | Issued: | |
| Approval Date: | | | 16 |

There was a threat/risk to services over the next few years owing to lack of funding. STAR had managed to secure Big Lottery funding for the next three years, but other areas in the Pennine Division had no secure funding. Funding in Burnley had been reduced by 50% which meant there was no longer the capacity to attend court with victims. If the victim did not attend court the case was usually dismissed. There were sometimes financial reasons why victims do not attend court e.g. childcare. Court could also be very intimidating especially when the perpetrator was sat in the same room only a short distance away. Sometimes the same individual would repeatedly withdraw cases, this is where work with MARAC and STAR was important. Police were also able to look at physical evidence even if the victim was unwilling to press charges.

Social services were heavily involved with child protection, and schools were improving on recognising the timing of incidents in school and being able to identify if there was any correlation with home events. Schools were getting better at working on relationships through PHSE and the Police were also working with schools to promote healthy relationships.

Keeping abuse hidden was still in existence within some cultures. There were not as many instances of men reporting abuse. Members commented that this was possibly because men found it more difficult to report incidents in case they were not taken seriously. **(Recommendation 5)**

5.10 Green Vale Homes

Information was provided by Frances Clarke to the meeting on 5th January 2012.

It was confirmed that Green Vale Homes did not formally record cases of domestic violence from tenants as in most instances they would not be made aware of them. However, it was possible to get data from their choice based lettings system. Rossendale Council's Homelessness Team would give a priority banding if someone was homeless as a result of domestic violence. The bandings were as follows:

- Band 1 priority if deemed to be statutory homeless as a result of domestic violence.
- Band 2 would be given if the customer was in a hostel/refuge.
- Band 3 would be given if fleeing domestic violence and living with family/friends.

Green Vale Homes staff were aware of the services that STAR provided and would refer tenants/applicants as identified. There were currently three Green Vale Homes tenants with an alarm system in place which were charged for. There were also two known cases that had emergency mobile phones provided.

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------|------|
| Version Number: | 03 | Team: | C&MS |
| Date: | 15 th February 2012 | Issued: | |
| Approval Date: | | | 17 |

Members questioned why Green Vale Homes were charging for security adaptations, particularly since it was beneficial to them to look after their own properties. They suggested making use of the tenants magazine to promote STAR and also working more closely with STAR in making homes secure for identified people. **(Recommendations 2, 4 and 6)**

Members noted that additional problems could be created if people were having to stay with relatives or friends and queried Rossendale Council's priority banding system.

Detective Inspector Crokken who was present at the meeting on 5th January 2012 confirmed that Housing Associations should attend MARAC if any of their tenants are identified as high risk. MARAC would look into whether the house was secure and alarmed, etc.

On 9th February 2012, Mandy Whittaker, Community Housing Manager, attended the meeting to assist members with any remaining queries. She clarified that Green Vale Homes had a Domestic Abuse Policy and that all staff were trained on the policy and procedure, including those who went into properties.

In addition to the policy Concern Cards were used to identify any issues and not just domestic abuse issues. These would be sent to the Community Housing Manager or Supported Housing Manager to assist with protecting victims and members of the family. Concern Cards were dealt with immediately and referrals were made to other partners e.g. Police, if necessary. Before making a referral it was important to gain the consent of the victim.

There were not high instances of Concern Cards being reported and it could be 4-5 months before they is cause for concern and an issue being reported. There were also not many instances where there was a need for re-housing as a result of domestic violence, as most victims elected to stay in their own property if they could, as often they had family support networks.

Green Vale Homes also worked with the STAR Centre and the Council's Housing Team to provide advice and support, and attended MARAC if any of their tenants were identified as high risk victims or any tenant was identified as a perpetrator.

Following the meeting on the 9th February additional information was provided to clarify that tenants using the Careline Service were not charged. The Careline Service was available to Green Vale Homes tenants or private sector and was a pendant alarm. This was funded through the STAR Centre or through Supporting People (if the customer was in receipt of Housing Benefit).

Members noted that the recent Domestic Abuse Policy was very good and that the Concern Cards were a good idea, and useful for reporting any concerns.

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------|------|
| Version Number: | 03 | Team: | C&MS |
| Date: | 15 th February 2012 | Issued: | |
| Approval Date: | | | 18 |

5.11 Lancashire County Council

Helene Cooper, Lancashire County Council's Community Safety and Justice Coordinator, provided information for members at the meeting on 5th January 2012 in relation to the structure of services in Lancashire, the funding provided, and the mapping work being undertaken.

Members commented that the cost of providing the independent domestic abuse advisors was well worth the money. **(Recommendation 7)** Domestic violence was increasing but funding was being reduced and with no secure sources of funding this position was likely to get worse. There were other models of delivery across Lancashire, for example, South Ribble and Chorley had services delivered by Council for Voluntary Services and Citizens Advice Bureau. In the long term it could be beneficial to look at different delivery options. **(Recommendation 3)**

Members noted that the Community Safety Partnership had previously provided funding, therefore should Lancashire County Council be providing preventative funding through their new role as a public health provider, particularly since it would assist in reducing Accident and Emergency and treatment costs. **(Recommendation 7)**

Detective Inspector Crocken who was present at the meeting on 5th January 2012 informed that Lancashire had missed out this year on a significant amount of funding. From April Lancashire County Council would be looking at funding and how it was based across the district areas.

5.12 Clarification Meeting

On 9th February 2012 the task and finish group met with Fiona Meechan, Director of Customers and Communities, Phil Seddon, Head of Finance and Rebecca Lawlor, Health and Housing Manager, to clarify outstanding queries on funding, legislative requirements and domestic violence service provision within Rossendale.

The Head of Finance clarified that owing to difficulties at the end of 2011 £6,000 had been given to STAR in October and £6,000 in November by means of a loan. These amounts would need paying back to the council. STAR had received £13,200 in grants from the council this year and for the next 2 years, but this was subject to yearly review. STAR would need to identify match funding for the Big Lottery Fund grant they had gained, and the council had offered assistance in identifying match funding and help with writing future bids. The Head of Finance advised that the STAR Centre can use evidence from any advice meetings with council officers as match funding.

The Director of Customers and Communities confirmed that the council had been benchmarking with other services in other areas. Bids had been written by the council to access funding from the Drugs/Alcohol Action Team and

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------|------|
| Version Number: | 03 | Team: | C&MS |
| Date: | 15 th February 2012 | Issued: | |
| Approval Date: | | | 19 |

Police. The council was currently awaiting £10k, £1k and £3k to come through. The Director of Customers and Communities also confirmed that an extra £5k was going to the Sanctuary Scheme and £8k had been earmarked for setting up safe houses. A wide partnership approach to all crime was being looked at through the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and once a Community Safety Plan had been developed, they would look at whether the Rossendale Domestic Violence Partnership meeting would still be required.

Members noted that there had been an event in November for funded partners to update on performance and how the funding was being used. The Director of Customers and Communities informed that STAR had not attended the event, but this could have been owing to capacity issues.

The council was hoping to get money from the Police Authority for STAR to enable them to set up a database. Effective provision of statistics and outputs would be essential for gaining funding when the new Police Commissioner was in place from November.

Rebecca Lawlor, Health and Housing Manager, clarified that they were hoping to run a pilot scheme in conjunction with STAR and a housing association with regards to safe-houses. They would first need to discuss with partners how it would work in reality, and whether there would be a fixed property or rolling stock.

The Health and Housing Manager confirmed that both housing associations and private landlords had a duty to make their tenants safe and secure, and make any safety adjustments necessary. **(Recommendation 4)**

In relation to domestic violence provision in Rossendale there was a need to think about the future and have a long term plan. There would also be a need to work with more closely with partners. **(Recommendation 3)**

Members noted that there was a need to have key partners as trustees of the STAR Centre. This would also help with governance arrangements. It was also ideal if STAR had support with visioning and long term planning. **(Recommendations 1 and 3)**

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 Domestic abuse incidents were increasing in Rossendale, however funding was becoming more difficult to access.
- 6.2 Continued support would be required from Lancashire County Council and other partners in providing funding to the borough to maintain service provision.
- 6.3 Whilst MARAC met fortnightly to look at high-risk cases, there was a need for the Rossendale Domestic Abuse Partnership to meet regularly and have appropriate attendees. This would ensure that services provided within the

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------|------|
| Version Number: | 03 | Team: | C&MS |
| Date: | 15 th February 2012 | Issued: | |
| Approval Date: | | | 20 |

borough were relevant and effective, and that partners could work together to secure funding and assist each others provision where possible. Partners would need to work together in promoting help services for men as well as women.

- 6.4 Rossendale Borough Council needs to work in partnership with other agencies to maximise funding opportunities and work with other authorities in exploring alternative delivery models to inform future service improvements. The council should also approach other agencies for prevention funding.
- 6.5 As a third sector provider STAR would benefit from having trustees to help shape provision, facilitate fundraising activity and help engage new volunteers. STAR would also benefit from continued partnership working with the council in relation to finance and funding.
- 6.6 Housing Associations and private landlords have a duty to provide for the safety of their tenants and should assist by funding safety measures required on their properties where domestic abuse is reported. They should also ensure that staff are aware of how to signpost to domestic abuse services and promote services with their residents.
- 6.7 Whilst the council has a Domestic Abuse Policy the policy should be revised and reference made to domestic violence within minority groups including BME and disabled people. **(Recommendation 8)**

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|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------|------|
| Version Number: | 03 | Team: | C&MS |
| Date: | 15 th February 2012 | Issued: | |
| Approval Date: | | | 21 |