

The Vale of Glamorgan Council

Cabinet Meeting: 17 July, 2017

Report of the Cabinet Member for Housing and Building Services

Violence against Women, Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence Act 2015 Update

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide an update regarding the work being progressed in response to the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act 2015 (VAWDASA) and to agree the allocation of support funding and the progression of an advocacy support pilot project.

Recommendations

1. That the update regarding the current work is noted.
2. That Cabinet approves the allocation of funding from Welsh Government to support the ongoing work of addressing the needs in response of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act 2015.
3. That Cabinet delegates authority to the Director of Environment and Housing Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Building Services to approve the specification, commissioning and award of tender and contract for of a pilot service to deliver advocacy support to victims of domestic and sexual abuse.
4. That the Head of Legal services is authorised to draft and execute the necessary form of contract with the provider of the pilot service.
5. That further reports on the Council's actions in satisfying our duties under the Act are provided in due course.

Reasons for the Recommendations

1. In order to demonstrate the Council's commitment to provide support to vulnerable victims of domestic and sexual abuse.
2. To continue with existing strategic support which has already proved successful and enabled the Council to implement new ways of working due to the strong partnerships and operational arrangements that have been put in place.

3. To pilot a new support and preventative service in the Vale that will provide a more consistent holistic approach to supporting victims and enable the support to be provided at an earlier stage.
4. To ensure compliance with the Council's procurement and contract policies.
5. To ensure that Cabinet is kept suitably informed.

Background

2. Domestic and Sexual abuse is a priority for the Safer Vale Partnership which is chaired by the Director of Environment and Housing Services. The Safer Vale Partnership is the Strategic Board responsible for reducing Crime and Disorder in the Vale of Glamorgan. Partners that are represented on the Board are; Vale of Glamorgan Council, South Wales Police, South Wales Fire and Rescue, Cardiff and Vale Health Trust, National Probation Service, Police and Crime Commissioner and the Voluntary Sector. The Board reviews performance and identifies opportunities for improvements.
3. VAWDASA was implemented to improve arrangements for the prevention of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence; to improve arrangements for the protection of victims and improve support for people affected by such abuse.
4. In order to assist local Partnerships, the Welsh Government provides funding to deliver support and provides strategic support. Within the Vale of Glamorgan the funding awarded is £77,060. The funding is awarded on an annual basis and the Vale of Glamorgan Council is the host agency.
5. The Safer Vale Partnership produces a business case that supports the delivery of services for the year and Welsh Government monitors the Partnership's performance.
6. Domestic and Sexual Abuse services require a co-ordinated approach within the Authority. Many internal departments within the Council are involved in the planning of services and monitoring arrangements to ensure that a consistent approach is provided. Departments include, but are not limited to; Housing, Social Services, Education, Community Safety and Health and Safety.
7. In 2014 the Community Safety team was restructured into the Housing Department. This was as a result of the synergies that existed in the operational delivery of services. It has also resulted in a more co-ordinated strategic approach to priorities such as Domestic and Sexual Abuse. As a result, the improved relationship between Supporting People and Community Safety has enabled improved commissioning of services and an opportunity to develop new services that will provide improved support and prevention services.

Relevant Issues and Options

8. The Business Case for VAWDASA for 2017/18 has been developed within the multi-agency governance structures in the Vale and was agreed at the Safer Vale Partnership Board. The focus for 2017/18 is prevention, early identification and support.
9. There are three services that are funded via a Domestic Abuse service grant, two of which are hosted within the Vale of Glamorgan Council and the third service which will be commissioned as a specialist service.

10. A Domestic and Sexual Abuse Co-ordinator - post is hosted by the Vale of Glamorgan Council and is managed by the Safer Vale Manager. The role of the co-ordinator is to ensure that the Council fulfils its statutory functions in delivering the VAWDASA requirements. The post reviews the current multi agency services that are in place and recommends improvements in services and provides that central point of expertise. The post holder manages a number of schemes, including the implementation of the National Training Framework, target hardening, domestic homicide reviews and monitoring of commissioned services.
11. The Council has managed the target hardening service for a number of years. In 2016/17, 69 properties within the Vale of Glamorgan received this service at no financial cost to owners. During this year the Vale piloted a new element of this service that was funded via Welsh Government which introduced the installation of a CCTV camera and an intruder alarm for victims that were assessed as high risk. This has provided a 100% satisfaction level with victims feeling safer and able to remain in their own home without the need to identify alternative accommodation.
12. The second service is the MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) which is also hosted within the Vale of Glamorgan Council. In 2016/17 the Vale of Glamorgan Council began this service as a pilot in order to understand the demand that existed for high risk victims and to review the service pathway. It was agreed by the Safer Vale Partnership that the service would sit within the role of Community Safety Assistant (X2) and that this would provide resilience and an increased opportunity to identify cross cutting links with anti-social behaviour, substance misuse and preventative/supporting services.
13. As a result of this service it was evident that there were missed opportunities with agencies not having the correct information at the right time in order to support and prevent incidents of domestic and sexual violence. For example within Q3 2016/17 there were 80 cases that were referred to MARAC and of these, 22 cases had been reported by the community for causing anti-social behaviour (mainly noise). As a result some of the 22 cases could have been managed differently in terms of providing victims with the correct support.
14. Currently the Domestic and Sexual Abuse co-ordinator is reviewing the statistics which are updated weekly to review how agencies can improve their response to ensure that victims are receiving the right support at the right time. The co-ordinator is reviewing how other local authorities provide support and if the Vale can learn and adapt their way of working in order to improve outcomes and support for victims and their families.
15. Within the Vale the focus has been on supporting high risk victims (due to limited funding available). Whilst this service has been invaluable to protecting and supporting high risk victims, it has not allowed agencies to identify victims at an earlier stage and provide support to prevent victims from escalating to high risk. During 2016/17 the Vale would like to pilot a new service that would provide support for standard/medium and high risk victims in order to minimise risk and to provide the right support at the right time. In order to achieve this, the Community Safety team and the Supporting People team propose to jointly work on commissioning this as a pilot service. It is proposed that over the length of the pilot team services will learn from what works and will be able to commission a full service from 2018/19.
16. During the period April 2016 and April 2017, Vale of Glamorgan Police received approximately 3000 Domestic Abuse calls (PPN,s, Public Protection Notifications), On average 10% of the calls will be High Risk victims which are supported through

the MARAC process, this leaves 90% of families with little or no support in respect of Domestic and Sexual Violence.

17. In January 2017 Welsh Government wrote to all Local Authorities in Wales to advise that 2017/18 would be a transition year for regional arrangements to be implemented. The region is Cardiff and the Vale. Discussions have taken place between officers of both local authorities and options are currently being reviewed.

Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)

18. Funding for these services are met by the following:
 - Welsh Government Funding £77,060
 - Housing £34,000
19. Funding is awarded on an annual basis which makes it difficult to plan and commission services. There are three local authority employed staff that are funded via the Welsh Government funding, 2 of which are on temporary contracts.
20. The commissioning of the pilot project will follow the Vale Council's financial regulations in order to provide value for money. Whilst the full costs of this project are not known at this stage, they can be met within the budgets that have been allocated.

Sustainability and Climate Change Implications

21. Discussions are taking place between Cardiff Council Officers and Vale Council officers to identify ways to work together in order to provide more sustainable services.

Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)

22. It will be necessary to agree and enter into a form of contract with the provider ultimately selected to run the pilot scheme

Crime and Disorder Implications

23. The development of providing good quality domestic and sexual violence services will protect and support vulnerable victims who are highly likely to be more susceptible to being victims of further incidents. The provision of services to vulnerable clients will have a beneficial impact on reducing crime and disorder within the Vale of Glamorgan.

Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)

24. All victims have access to services within the Vale of Glamorgan.

Corporate/Service Objectives

25. This report is consistent with the Corporate Objective of the Council.
Contributes to outcome 9 of the Community Strategy 2011 - 21 and the Wellbeing Outcome 1: An Inclusive and Safe Vale of the Corporate Plan 2016 - 20.

Policy Framework and Budget

26. This is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet.

Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)

27. The provision of Domestic and Sexual Abuse services is a Vale wide responsibility and there are no specific implications for individual wards.

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

28. Homes and Safe Communities.

Background Papers

None

Contact Officer

Deborah Gibbs - Community Safety Manager.

Officers Consulted

Housing Solutions and Supporting People Team Leader
Committee Reports - Legal
Accountant for Housing and Building Services

Responsible Officer:

Miles Punter - Director of Environment and Housing Services