

Meeting of:	Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Tuesday, 10 December 2019
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Homes and Safe Communities
Report Title:	Domestic Abuse, Assessment and Referral Co-ordinator Progress Report
Purpose of Report:	To inform the Scrutiny Committee of the key outcomes of the pilot Domestic Abuse Assessment and Referral Coordination (DAARC) Service during the period June 2018- December 2018 and to highlight a number of Case Studies to demonstrating the success of the project to date.
Report Owner:	Miles Punter - Director of Environment and Housing
Responsible Officer:	Deborah Gibbs - Community Safety and Partnership Team Manager
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Councillor Edward Williams, Legal, Regulatory and Planning Service Mike Ingram, Head of Housing and Building Services Amber Condy, Operational Manager, Children and Young People Services Annemarie McKay, Safeguarding Officer, Achievement for All Pam Toms, Operational Manager, Public Housing Services
Policy Framework:	This report is within the policy framework and budget.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This report brings to the attention of Scrutiny the performance of the pilot Domestic Abuse Assessment and Referral Coordination (DAARC) service during its first 6 months. During this period, an evaluation of the service was conducted and the conclusions included in this report, along with some case studies showing the positive impact of the service on individuals. • The report will also detail performance information from the first two quarters in 2019, to provide the Scrutiny Committee with an indication of more recent performance and include an update on progress since the initial evaluation. 	

Recommendations

1. That Scrutiny Committee considers the findings from the evaluation of the DAARC service.
2. That Scrutiny Committee notes the wider data from domestic abuse services across the Vale.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To update Members on the positive impact of the DAARC Project located within the Community Safety Team.
2. To ensure accountability for domestic abuse services and to help to drive improvement in the quality of victim support.

1. Background

- 1.1 In the Vale of Glamorgan, domestic abuse accounts for approximately 18% of all total recorded crime. This is roughly consistent with the rest of Wales and the figure is not an insignificant one, especially when considering that despite recent improvements to encourage victims to report and to improve identification of domestic abuse issues, domestic abuse remains an under reported and under recorded crime.
- 1.2 One of the striking features of those who experience domestic abuse is the comorbidity with other problems that are often equally complex in nature and very resource intensive on services.
- 1.3 Indeed, in the first two quarters of 2019, the DAARC project recorded that of the 979 Domestic Abuse Public Protection Notices (PPNs) received by the service, 33% of victims had also identified mental health issues, 20% had identified drugs problems and 22% had identified alcohol issues.
- 1.4 The Vale of Glamorgan Local Authority Community Safety Team has long been committed to finding more effective ways of working with vulnerable individuals who present across multiple services with multiple needs.
- 1.5 In 2016, the Community Safety Team assembled key partners and victims to better understand what those needs were for individuals who had complex and co-occurring issues to develop better ways of working and achieve more effective outcomes for individuals. It became apparent that one significant area of need was in relation to victims of domestic abuse who were identified as 'standard' or 'medium' risk by the police following their involvement with the 'domestic' incident.

- 1.6** Each time the Police are called to a domestic abuse incident, a notification is created called a Domestic Abuse Public Protection Notice (DA PPN) which is sent to Police Risk Assessors. These risk assessors assign a risk rating of standard, medium or high to the case.
- 1.7** Prior to the implementation of the DAARC, these PPNs were sent to all services with very little coordination and no scrutiny. This would result in services receiving a vast number of PPNs which would never meet their service threshold requirements. In addition, some PPN referrals would often be duplicated because the lack of coordination meant that each service would deem it necessary to share the information with every other service in order to minimise the risk of information being missed. The result of this was that standard and medium PPNs would often go unseen and unsupported as high risk PPNs would always be given greater priority.
- 1.8** The DAARC service is now able to ensure that a number of checks are made on all victims and their families who are deemed standard or medium risk by the Police Risk Assessor to determine who is already in contact with the victim, what their needs are and what their support priorities are. Where consent has been provided by the victim, the DAARC coordinator contacts the victim to ensure client centred support is offered and assists the victim understand the available pathways and their future support options. This ensures that the victim is able to access the right service at the right time.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** The DAARC service was launched in April 2018 and the support element of the project went 'live' in June 2018 following seven weeks of staff induction.
- 2.2** In its first six months the DAARC received and processed 1107 DA PPNs, of which 990 were referred to the appropriate services for support. These 1107 incidents involved 1448 children, highlighting the significant need to provide the right support at the earliest opportunity in order to reduce the risk of continued adverse childhood experiences.
- 2.3** The required outcomes of the service are to:
- Reduce the number of DA PPNs escalated from standard and medium risk to high risk
 - Decrease the number of repeat DA PPNs
 - Decrease the number of inappropriate referrals of DA PPNs to services within the pathway
 - Decrease the number of duplicate referrals from DA PPNs to services within the pathway
 - Improve the experience of the pathway for victims

- Improve the safety and outcomes for victims
- Improve communication in the pathway where multiple agencies are involved with one client.

2.4 It was initially difficult to set tangible outcomes for the pilot project because of the lack of recorded data available for analysis (base data) prior to the DAARC service being set up. This has meant that the evaluation had to rely on qualitative feedback from professionals.

2.5 The team was committed to finding a way of managing and recording data in order to more effectively analyse and monitor the performance of the service. However, given the lack of funding to purchase a bespoke client management system, the service initially used trial and error to establish what worked best. It now has a system, using an electronic database which enables the recording of the required information to allow the extraction of data for monthly monitoring and trend analysis. This means that the Vale of Glamorgan Council is now recording key information about domestic abuse which provides an insight into the needs of victims at the earliest point of interaction with services.

2.6 An extract of the data from the evaluation is included as Appendix A of this report.

2.7 The Evaluation used qualitative interviews with staff across the pathway and feedback from the victims which showed the key strengths of the project as follows:

2.7.1 A reduction in inappropriate referrals across the pathway. This reduction has freed up the capacity for professionals to offer support to standard and medium PPN victims and their families, where before this would never have been possible. For example, the data indicated that there was a 47% reduction in inappropriate referrals to Children's Services, which led to greater capacity on the cases that did meet their threshold. The same was experienced by Adult Services who previously received all referrals where it was felt the adult had any type of vulnerability. The Local Authority Adult Services Team provide support for those who have social care needs that might affect their health, safety or independence. Where home improvements were needed, the target hardening service, which offers physical measures for improving the safety of the home of a victim (locks/alarms/CCTV etc) were provided by the DAARC team. Subsequent analysis of the DAARC data collected showed that only 3% of referrals met the threshold for Adult Services, which meant that a minimum of 90% of inappropriate referrals were removed from the Adult Service Assessment list.

2.7.2 A reduction in duplicate referrals across the pathway because of this central point of contact.

2.7.3 The provision of early intervention services for those victims of domestic abuse who are assessed as being standard or medium risk where

previously they would have had to wait until their situation escalates to high risk before getting the support they need.

2.7.4 A service to actively help victims feel safer resulting in improvements in their home situation, their physical and mental health and their overall quality of life.

2.7.5 Although it is too early to evidence a lower rate of repeat referrals and lower escalations into higher risk repeats, it is expected that this will happen in the future and improve the cost efficiency of services by enabling them to offer interventions at an earlier point across the support pathway.

2.8 The pilot evaluation identified the following gaps or recommendations:

That the DAARC team meet with the police risk assessors to look at how to reduce the delay between the referral reaching the DAARC coordinator and to stop all referrals being made from Police Risk Assessors to other agencies unless this is being done for a safeguarding reason that can't be covered by the DAARC team.

That the DAARC coordinator attends the relevant Education forums to engage with schools and update them on how their part of the process is being used and how it is helping in the early identification and prevention of problems where children have been involved in a domestic abuse incident.

That the DAARC coordinator meets with Children's Services to revisit the thresholds for appropriate referrals.

That the DAARC team work with domestic abuse and substance misuse colleagues to create an assessment that makes better use of therapeutic techniques to encourage the victim to identify areas where change could be possible. The recommendation is that the DAARC team work with these colleagues to look at how the service can increase the number of referrals into substance misuse services and domestic abuse services.

2.9 The team has successfully implemented these recommendations and made the appropriate changes. In addition there are a further three outstanding recommendations which are:

That the team is to develop a system of (virtual) daily discussions with partners to discuss cases in a more joined up manner and to provide feedback where cases require more complex service input.

That a case be put forward for the implementation of a joined-up IT client management system that has the capacity to interface with other IT infrastructures.

- 2.10** To review options for repeat victims of domestic abuse. The team is currently reviewing a task and finish model that has proven to be successful when managing anti-social behaviour cases. These actions are items on the draft Safer Vale Partnership Strategy Action Plan for completion in 2020/21.
- 2.11** The DAARC service was recognised in the National UK Housing Awards, where the project was shortlisted to the final nine projects within the UK under the category of Innovative Landlord of the Year and won the Vale of Glamorgan Council Annual Staff Award 2019 for Innovation.
- 2.12** On-going data collection, since the completion of the pilot evaluation has shown that in the first two quarters of 2019, the team received 979 referrals, which included 1237 children. 58% were referred to Children's Services 7% were referred to Adult Services and 22% were referred to Atal y Fro, the third sector specialist domestic abuse support provider.
- 2.13** For an overview of domestic abuse across the Vale generally, there were 186 MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) cases (high risk domestic abuse PPN incidents) across the same 6-month reporting period. This is an increase from the previous year which is reflective of the increasing trend across the whole of the United Kingdom. This is thought to be a positive increase as it demonstrates improvements in victims coming forward, the higher levels of domestic abuse instances identified and improvement in reporting methods, rather than an actual increase in the numbers of individuals experiencing high risk domestic abuse. The figure will also include a very small number of cases identified as needing escalation through the DAARC service. A case study demonstrating the benefit of this has been included in Appendix B.
- 2.14** Overall, better recording of appropriate data has enabled the team to identify the tenure of victim's housing and out of the total reported 17% of the PPNs were for Council tenancies. The team were able to share all of these referrals with Housing Services leading more joined up support being provided to the victim. An example of how this benefited one case in particular is included in Appendix B.
- 2.15** The DAARC service has also resulted in better recording of information relating to the perpetrators. It has been identified that a significant gap exists in services which address their behaviours and there is evidence that perpetrators frequently repeat their behaviour, not only with the same person but also with other victims. 46% of perpetrators from the first two quarters of 2019 were repeat perpetrators. This highlights a significant need to work with them to positively address abusive and coercive behaviours.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** Long Term: The DAARC service is one that focuses on improving outcomes now to create a benefit for the long-term future of victims of domestic abuse. The service works with victims holistically in order to provide suitable support at the earliest point so that victims don't experience higher risk incidents of domestic abuse later on which is both significantly harmful for them and their families and significantly resource intensive for services who are left dealing with victims with more developed, more complex issues and at a point of crisis.
- 3.2** Preventative: The service works with victims of domestic abuse who have been identified as standard and medium risk, to provide the right support by the right service early on in order to reduce the likelihood of another incident occurring at a higher risk rating.
- 3.3** Integration & Collaboration: The service works in partnership with other departments of the Local Authority as well as considering the well-being objectives of external partners who are fully integrated in the service in order to provide a more holistic and appropriate level of support to those who need support.
- 3.4** Involvement: Victims of Domestic Abuse were consulted with during the planning and development of the DAARC service. Victims are encouraged to provide feedback on the service received once they have completed their involvement with the DAARC.
- 3.5** The proposal evidences a contribution to the wellbeing objective "Providing decent homes and safe communities" by addressing the needs of victims of domestic abuse.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 4.1** Currently, the project is being funded up to the end of March 2020 by the Housing Support Grant as it contributes to the prevention of homelessness.
- 4.2** The cost of the service is £37,000 per annum and internal discussions are currently ongoing in order to identify long term funding for the service to continue from 1st April 2020.

Employment

4.3 There are no direct employment implications arising from this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

4.4 The Community Safety team has a number of functions. The DAARC service assists the Council in meeting some of its obligations under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, The Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act (Wales) 2015 and the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

4.5 The service is available to all victims within the Vale of Glamorgan.

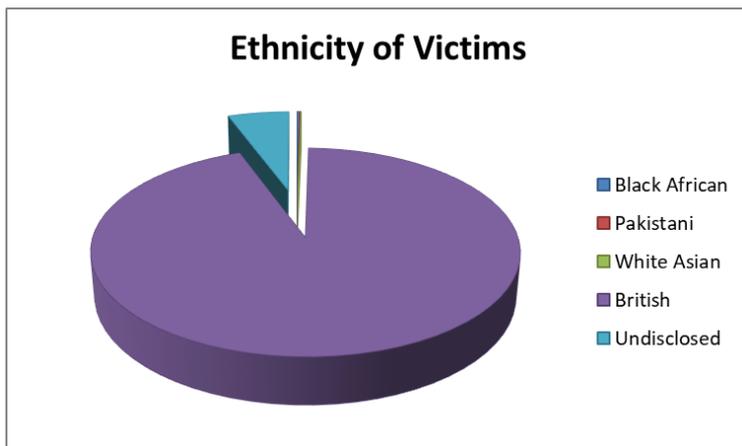
5. Background Papers

None.

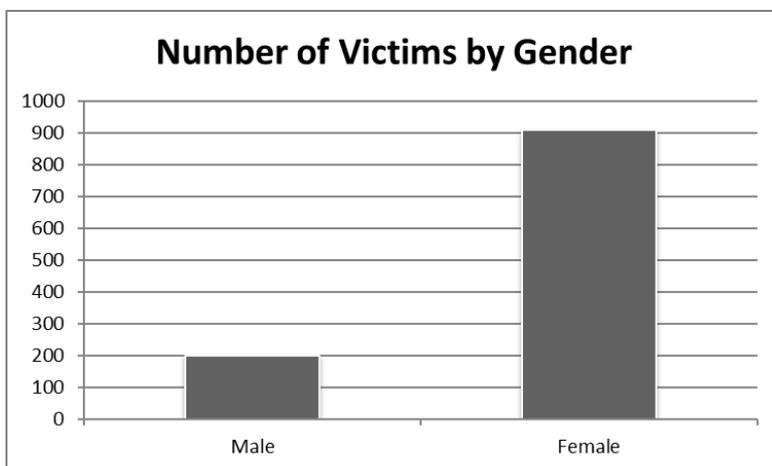
Findings from the DAARC Service – The Data

The DAARC received 1107 referrals between the 18th June 2018, its launch date, and the 18th December 2018. Of these referrals,

- 2 were Black African, 1 was Pakistani, 1 was white Asian, 1041 were British (remainder undisclosed)

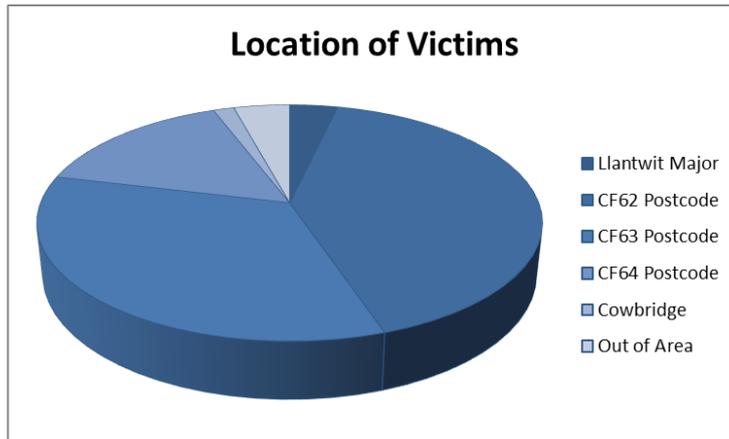


- 199 were male, 908 were female.

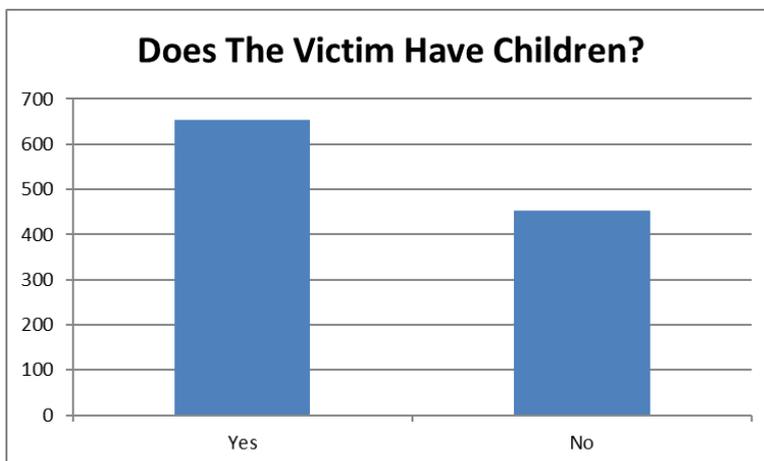


- Of the 1107, 85 records contained no postcode information. The remaining 1022 showed that, 37 were from Llantwit Major, 421 were from the Barry CF62 area, (Rhoose, St Athan, Llancarfan and Barry Island), 347 were from the Barry CF63 area (Cadoxton, Barry Docks) 158 were from CF64 (Penarth and Dinas Powys) 16 were from Cowbridge. 43 were from out of area.

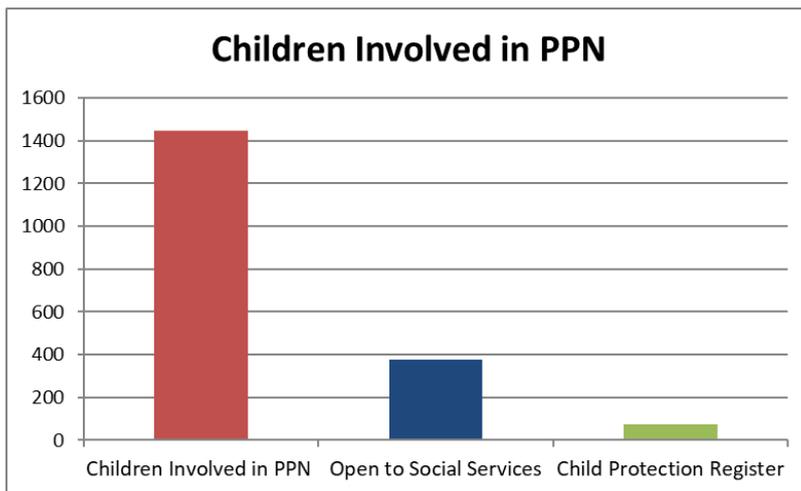
Appendix A : Data from the DAARC Service Evaluation



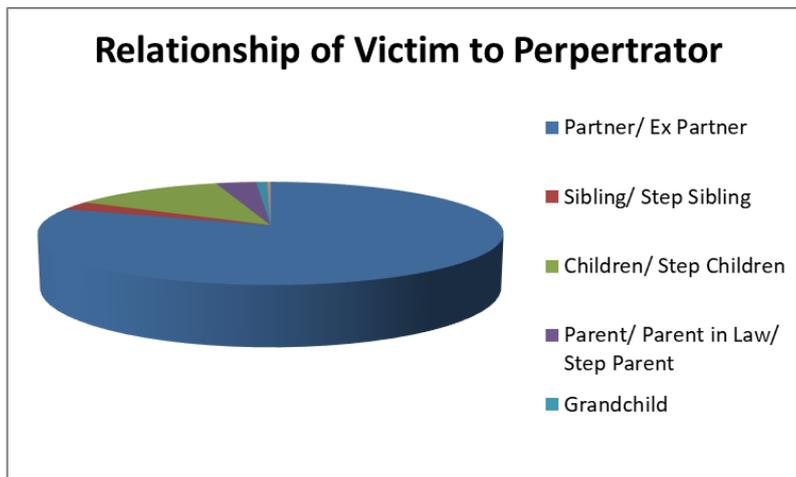
- 447 DA PPNs were listed as not having any children involved



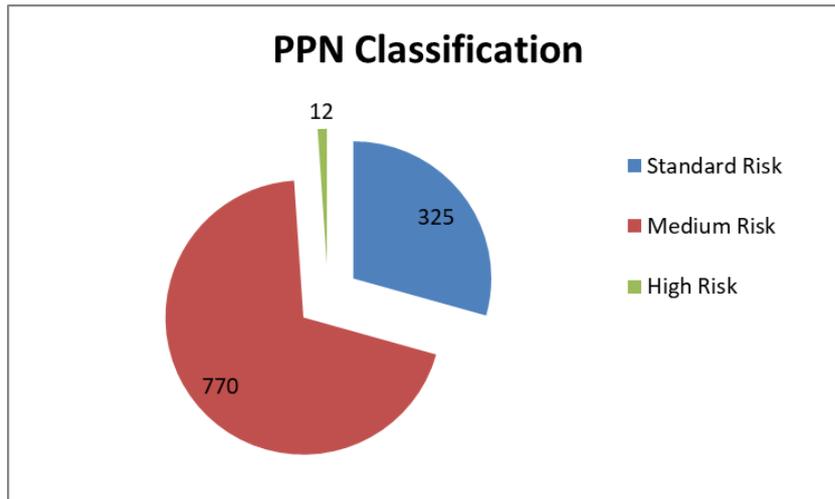
- 1448 children were involved in a DA PPN of which 374 were already open to social services prior to the domestic abuse incident. 75 were listed as being on the child protection register.



- Of the 1107, 93 of the incidents did not record the relationship of the victim to the perpetrator. The remaining 1014 incidents show that, 816 were perpetrated by a partner or ex-partner relationships, 27 were perpetrated by a sibling or step sibling, 126 incidents were perpetrated by children or step children, 33 were perpetrated by a parent, parent in law or step parent, 9 a grandchild, 1 a step grandfather and 1 incident perpetrated by a nephew. (1 case was no relation at all)



Of the 1107, 770 were medium risk DA PPNs, 325 were standard risk DA PPNs and 12 were high risk.

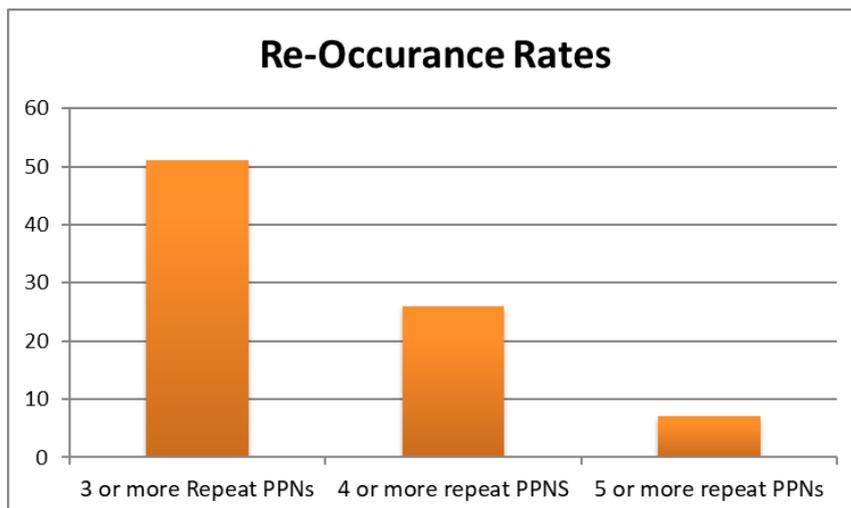


Of the 1107 referrals between 18th June and the 18th December 20% of these were repeat victims. This meant that in the 6 months of the pilot, 844 new individuals were processed which represents an average of 141 individuals a month.

The figures indicate that of the 174 individuals that experienced a repeat DA PPN, only 9% had a decreased risk rating from their subsequent DA PPNs, and of these 9% 2 individuals first showed an increase in risk before decreasing again.

26% increased in risk (which included 4 individuals who decreased first before increasing again)

A breakdown of the 174 individuals shows that 51 individuals had 3 or more repeat DA PPNs, 26 had 4 or more and 7 had over 5.



Appendix B - Case Study (Escalation of Domestic Abuse)

The Domestic Abuse Assessment and Referral co-ordinator (DAARC) received five Public Protection notifications (PPN's) within a six-month period consisting of four medium risk incidents and one standard risk incident all for the same family.

The family included a male (the perpetrator) and a female (the victim) who were in a long-term relationship and their two children.

The perpetrator is a drinker and smokes cannabis and the victim stated that he changes when under the influence and becomes verbally abusive towards her. Initially she could not leave him due to him stating he could not live without her, however the relationship ended with the hope that they could stay amicable for the children.

Verbal arguments started between the two of them over things such as car finance. They engaged in verbal arguments over text messages, he threatened to report her to Social Services for taking the children on holiday without his consent as she was taking her new partner away with them. She stated that it was never physical abuse between them however the contact from him was persistent. Even after she blocked him he started to contact her via email which made it more difficult for her to block the contact.

The victim did not want police action initially and did not even want the police to speak to him however when he started to email her and she could not block the emails she decided she wanted the police to speak to him but all she wanted was for them to have contact from him in relation to the children.

The victim initially refused to have contact from agencies to offer support however this meant that the PPN would still be shared with statutory agencies and both Education and Social Services were informed of the incidents taking place. After receiving numerous PPNs with refused consent the victim consented to being contacted to offer support and the client was referred to Atal Y Fro for specialist support.

A further PPN came through for an incident where the children were with their father and they called her to ask her to go to get them as their father was intoxicated whilst they were in his care. The father followed them home and began being verbally abusive towards the victim, once at their home address. The victim also disclosed on this PPN that she was currently 11 weeks pregnant, with her new partner as the father.

Following this incident, the DAARC linked in with the client again and she stated that when he gets angry, she believes he is capable of killing her although he had not verbalised this to her. The client's main concern was that she wanted to be able to feel safe in her own home, and for as long as he is on the tenancy he will always have access to the property. As a result of this conversation the DAARC linked in with the Housing association and measures were put in place for the client to have a safe room within the property.

Due to the number of PPNs that had been received through the DAARC process and the concerns around the escalation of the behaviour being displayed by the perpetrator the DAARC escalated the concerns to the Police to have the case reviewed to ensure that all possible safeguarding measures were in place for the victim. It was agreed

that there was a clear escalation in behaviour and that the case would be discussed at MARAC due to the perpetrator now stating that he would kill the victim's new partner due to him not wanting his ex-partner to have a baby with him.

As a result of the MARAC meeting the victim was given advice around a non-molestation order and she was also supported by Atal Y Fro to get an occupation order from the courts with the aim of having him taken off the tenancy.

To date there have been no further reports of domestic abuse.

Appendix B - Case Study (Housing Management, DAARC & Police)

A phone call was received from a housing management officer to the DAARC (domestic abuse assessment referral coordinator) expressing concerns that they were currently working with a female tenant who had disclosed that she had been assaulted by her partner. The incident which had been reported to the police and was under investigation. The couple held a joint tenancy for their home.. As a result of the assault the perpetrator had left the property and not returned and the victim wanted him to be removed from the tenancy agreement as the relationship was clearly over and she wished to safeguard herself and the children.

The housing officer informed the DAARC that the perpetrator had presented himself as homeless requesting that he was re-housed. It was explained to him that he had made himself intentionally homeless as a result of his own actions (assaulting his wife) and therefore he would not be rehoused via the homelessness route. Upon receiving this information the perpetrator became agitated and aggressive informing the housing officer that in light of that information as he had nowhere else to go he would be returning to the marital home and no one could stop him.

The DAARC reviewed the case and identified that the perpetrator had an outstanding arrest for an offence of assault on his wife, but the police were unable to locate him. They therefore requested assistance and as a result the DAARC contacted the Homelessness Team and requested that should he return to them for advice they contact the police immediately for him to be arrested.

In the meantime DAARC liaised with police gave them the correct telephone number for the perpetrator provided by the housing office. The police officer rang perpetrator and requested that he attend the police station in order to resolve the issues.

A short time later the perpetrator attended at the police station and was subsequently arrested. He was interviewed and charged to court with the offence of assault, and given bail with conditions not to attend the home address and not to contact the victim, directly or indirectly.

In addition the DAARC arranged target hardening to ensure the victim and her children felt safe. Housing were also able to arrange for the victim to secure a sole tenancy and remain safely in her own home.

Appendix B - Case Study (Male Victim)

A Public Protection notification (PPN) was received by the Domestic abuse assessment referral co-ordinator (DAARC). The initial report stated that the male was the victim and there were issues with his ex-partner and child contact. The couple had separated but she was threatening him over text message and child contact. She had also taken his wallet leaving him with no money. The children were both under the age of 5.

The DAARC made contact to offer support and to signpost him to the appropriate agency. Whilst speaking with him he disclosed that he and his two children were staying at a relative's house and his main concern was securing a property for him and his two children quickly as he had been advised by Children Services not to return to the home address. He also mentioned that he had been struggling with his mental health and didn't feel his current medication was working. He was advised to visit his GP to discuss his mental health.

The DAARC initially spoke to Homelessness on his behalf who advised that he had already arranged an appointment however due to the circumstances he would be able to present to Homelessness as an emergency and be seen sooner. The DAARC contacted Atal y Fro to ascertain if he would be eligible for the dispersed housing scheme (a scheme commissioned by Supporting People to provide housing for victims fleeing domestic abuse that are unable to access traditional refuge provision). The male victim did meet the criteria and as a result a referral was made to Atal y Fro.

Atal y Fro contacted the male victim, where a safety plan was put in place and as there was no immediate threat as they were safe staying with a relative it was agreed that the assessment would take place within a few days.

Following the meeting he was accepted onto the dispersed housing scheme where a property was made available for him and his children. In addition to this, he received tenancy and emotional support from Atal y Fro funded by the Supporting People Programme Grant to deal with some of the issues he was experiencing as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse.

The male victim and his children were well supported, with updates from all agencies being positive. As a result, he was able to secure his own tenancy with his children and to plan ahead for a positive future.

As part of the DAARC service, he was randomly picked to provide feedback on the DAARC service he stated:

"I wasn't aware of the services available to me prior to the DAARC co-ordinator contacting me – I now feel safer – the service was brilliant – 10/10"