

Children's Scrutiny Committee: Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse

Report of the Chief Officer Children's Services

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

Children's Scrutiny Committee: Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse

1. Background

Over the past two years, Devon County Council and our partners have collectively developed a Devon DSVA (Domestic, Sexual Violence and Abuse) strategy 2016-2021 that sets out a vision to *end domestic and sexual violence and abuse in Devon*. The strategy is rooted in the real life experiences of people living in Devon who have suffered domestic and / or sexual violence and abuse. The DSVA strategy and five year action plan can be found at <https://new.devon.gov.uk/dsva/the-dsva-strategy-and-action-plan/>.

The cross-cutting nature of DSVA means that responsibility for tackling these issues sits across a wide range of different agencies. A multi-agency DSVA Strategy and Delivery group has been established to oversee the implementation of the action plan and is accountable to the Safer Devon Partnership.

The Safer Devon Partnership (SDP) has strategic accountability for the priorities in the DSVA Strategy. The Devon Children and Families Partnership (DCFP) have endorsed the priority to end DSVA and this is a key component of the Children's Partnership Delivery Plan.

Additionally, the DSVA Alliance is a network of different agencies committed to working together and sharing the responsibility to end DSVA in Devon.

2. Impact of DSVA on Children

"To achieve our vision of ending domestic and sexual violence and abuse in Devon we must take action at all levels – from prevention through to recovery and resilience.....Most importantly, the children, families and individuals affected by violence and abuse must be at the centre of everything we do".

Devon DSVA strategy 2016-2021

A large number of children and young people are affected by DSVA in Devon. Children were present at 39% of the 8,915 domestic violence incidents attended by the Police in Devon

2012-13. In a national study it was reported that 16% of children aged under 16 experience sexual abuse during childhood. There are currently 125,000 children aged under 16 living in Devon; 16% would represent 20,000 children.

Exposure to DSVA can significantly affect the health and development of children as well as having an impact on their future relationships. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are stressful or traumatic events in childhood. This includes harm that affects children directly (eg, abuse and neglect) and indirectly through their living environments (e.g., parental conflict, substance abuse, or mental illness). Research has shown that adults who have experienced 4 or more ACEs were 7 times more likely to have been violent in the last year and 11 times more likely to have used illicit drugs or been incarcerated. It is estimated that preventing ACEs in future generations could reduce violence victimisation by 51% and violence perpetration by 52% (Bellis et al, 2014).

3. Devon Domestic Abuse Support Service (DDASS)

The DSVA commissioning budget is approximately £800k per annum. This represents only a small proportion of the resources spent on DSVA across the system, with a significant additional funds and support generated by the specialist local domestic violence and abuse organisations in Devon.

Splitz Support Service has been commissioned by Devon County Council to deliver the Devon Domestic Abuse Support Service since April 2014. This has focused on short term interventions to safeguard and support adult victims of domestic violence and abuse and their children. The outcomes for victims as monitored by the national organisation SafeLives has been consistently above the national average, with well over 95% of clients being satisfied with the service and reporting increased safety.

DDASS is commissioned to deliver an information, advice and consultation role in relation to children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse.

1. DDASS currently monitors the outcomes of MARAC/MASH enquiries to ensure that all children of victims receive the appropriate service, regardless of where they are in the system.
2. DDASS supports non-abusive parents who are engaged with their service to support their children and young people. Of these children and young people, there is some limited capacity to directly support to children at high risk to maintain their safety.
3. DDASS offers support and consultancy to other professionals already working with children and young people affected by domestic abuse, and have devised a series of TALK Toolkits to help these professionals. They are providing training to all the safeguarding leads in schools across the county, as part of Operation Encompass and then offering ongoing support to these schools once Operation Encompass is implemented.

4. Other DSVA Services for Children

4.1 Domestic Abuse Services

Stop Abuse for Everyone (SAFE) and North Devon Against Domestic Abuse (NDADA) have delivered specialist domestic violence and abuse services in Devon for over 30 years.

Neither of these organisations are commissioned to deliver support to children and young people who have witnessed domestic violence and abuse, but both do to different extents and fund raise to be able to keep the services open.

NDADA runs the only refuge in Devon. It accommodates 8 women and 17 children at any one time. Over a typical year, residents are made up of 60% from Devon and 40% from elsewhere in the country. NDADA provides support for parents and their children who reside there, including parenting programmes and 121 support. The refuge is not commissioned and receives no statutory funding.

SAFE has run a Children and Families Service within Exeter, East and Mid Devon since October 2014. This provides therapeutic support the children and their non-abusive parent to help recover from the trauma of domestic abuse. There is also a strong emphasis on working with boys and men. Firstly, working with boys and young men who have experienced domestic violence by providing a positive male role model and secondly, supporting fathers who have used violence to parent positively. To date the work has been funded through short-term grants from Children in Need, Comic Relief and Big Lottery funding and the organisation's reserves. SAFE complete a distance travelled questionnaire with children/young people over the age of 7 at the outset and end of support delivery. One of the most impressive outcomes is that 53% of children have difficulty controlling their emotions at intake and none have at exit.

A partnership between Splitz, NDADA, SAFE and North Devon Council for DCLG funding was successful in 2017 and has provided 12 months of funding to extend the children and families services across the county; SAFE extended their reach to Teignbridge and South Hams and NDADA extended out of the refuge to deliver support in North Devon and Torridge. This funding will end in July 2018.

4.2 Sexual Abuse Services

There are some therapeutic services available for children who have been sexually abused.

Devon County Council and the CCG's commission Devon Integrated Children's Services to provide support children and young people who have experienced sexual abuse. JACAT (Journey After Child Abuse Team) provide therapeutic interventions to support children and young people individually to recover from the trauma and they work with their families too to help them come to terms with the abuse.

There are some third sector organisations that fund raise or use their own reserves to also offer support. Children's Society run Checkpoint which works with young people who have experienced Child Sexual Exploitation to develop their own coping and keep safe strategies. Devon Rape Crisis Service also provided a counselling service to any young person between the ages of 13-25 years who has experienced sexual violence.

5. Future Opportunities

In 2016 Ofsted contributed to Joint Targeted Area inspections in six Local Authorities to assess the partnership response given to children living with Domestic Violence and Abuse. There were two principles conclusions that echo the DSVA Strategy in Devon. Firstly, resources are focused on services to ensure the safety and well-being of children and victims of abuse, but little work is being done to prevent domestic abuse and repair the damage that it does. Secondly, that change must start with a more systematic focus on perpetrators' behaviour and preventing their abuse of their victims. To take forward these recommendations there are a number of work areas that are commencing in 2018/19.

5.1 Social Care Workforce Development

Almost three quarters of child protection plans are focused on neglect, of which domestic violence and abuse features heavily. The social care workforce can have a huge influence on the outcomes for the adult victim and the children and young people through the dialogue with the parents. The Safer Together Model is built on restorative social work principles and shifts the focus of child protection plans to manage the source of violence. It recognises and respects the different ways the non-abusive parent protects their children from the adult using violence and evidences the pattern of behaviour of the adult using violence in order to hold the individual to account within the family context. Public Health, Social Care and the Devon Children and Families Partnership have pooled funding to explore this model in two areas of Devon.

5.2 Integrated Offender Management

The Integrated Offender Management (IOM) pilot was established in May 2017 to use the multi-agency framework to provide a whole family response to domestic abuse for those convicted and for those non-statutory cases who have no convictions but significant incidence of domestic abuse. This requires involvement of the Police, Probation, drug and alcohol services, local domestic abuse support service (SPLITZ) and children's social care. The aim of the pilot is to achieve better outcomes for the abusers, victims and their children by developing an effective operating model which improves communication, information-sharing, coordination and management of those families affected by domestic abuse by all agencies involved. Safer Devon Partnership has funded two behaviour change IDVAs to support perpetrators who have not been convicted and the OPCC is funding a two year evaluation of the pilot.

5.3 Therapeutic Support for Children and Young People

The therapeutic support for children and young people who have experienced DSVA is largely funded through the fund-raising efforts of third sector organisations. Many of the sources of this funding for domestic abuse are ending in 2018 which will leave a gap in provision. There is an opportunity to look at how therapeutic provision for children and young people who have experienced trauma, be it domestic abuse, sexual violence or wider adverse childhood experienced are provided in Devon. Commissioners in children's services and communities are exploring possible funding sources.

5.4. Operation Encompass

Operation Encompass went live across Devon at the end of November, following roll-out training sessions with Designated Safeguarding Leads and their deputies across the county throughout November.

In Devon, we have added a bespoke 'bolt-on' partnership support session as an additional part of the Operation Encompass training package. This session has been designed and is being delivered in joint partnership between the Devon Domestic Abuse Support Service (Splitz), Early Help and the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). At each session each Designated Safeguarding Lead receives a printed copy of the Splitz TALK Toolkit - an educational tool kit for use in schools to help prevent Domestic Violence and Abuse and encourage discussion and debate around healthy relationships and self-esteem.

The official 'Launch Date' for all press releases and media for Operation Encompass going 'live' across Devon, Cornwall, Plymouth and Torbay is 10th January 2018.

5.5 Healthy Relationships in Schools

The Safer Devon Partnership (SDP) Board have agreed in principle to support and fund the development of an integrated support package of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) provision within schools for 2018-19. A key component will be healthy relationships. This will be expanded to include staff in supported accommodation provision, private childrens homes etc. Detailed proposals are currently being developed with the Devon Children and Families Partnership and will be agreed in February.

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Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Children, Schools & Skills: Councillor James McInnes

Chief Officer for Children's Services: Jo Olsson

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

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BACKGROUND PAPER	DATE	FILE REFERENCE
Nil		