

LEICESTER CITY HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD
DATE: 28th February 2019

Subject:	Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Leicester
Presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board by:	Stephanie McBurney and DCI Lucy Batchelor
Author:	Stephanie McBurney

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse affects large numbers of adults and children in Leicester. It can have a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of those individuals directly involved and the communities around them.

Domestic violence and abuse includes forced marriage, female genital mutilation and so called ‘honour based’ violence. It can take place between those aged 16 years and over and be within an intimate partner (current or past) or familial relationship.

A 2019 Home Office report estimated the unit cost of domestic abuse to be £34,015. Each domestic homicide is estimated to cost £2.2 million, arising from the cost of harms, health services and lost output. In

Leicester there have been 7¹ domestic homicides since domestic homicide reviews were made a statutory requirement.

Sexual abuse can take place inside or outside of a domestic violence situation. Roughly a third of all sexual offences take place within a setting that would meet the definition of domestic violence and abuse.

Current Picture

Sexual offences and domestic abuse is a priority for many local partnerships due to the high volume and harm taking place. Offences are increasing year on year and there is still a large volume of under-reporting. Research indicates that only 37% of those who have experienced domestic or sexual violence will have told an 'official agency' about it.

Leicester City Council is a lead contributor to specialist independent services for those affected and is a key partner in terms of provision of housing, safeguarding, licensing, community safety and neighbourhood services.

The local specialist voluntary sector provider of services for those affected by sexual and domestic violence is United Against Violence and Abuse Limited (UAVA). This is a co-operative consortium of further specialist organisations with a long-standing history of working with the issues in specific contexts.

UAVA deliver four main services in Leicester; an intervention service for men and women wishing to change their abusive behaviour (perpetrators), a Safe Home Service offering refuge accommodation and housing support, a Children, Young People and Family Service offering individual and group support including respite and creche facilities, and a Support and Information Service, which runs a helpline, group and individual support for anyone affected by the issues across Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland. 2313 referrals came into these services last year².

¹ Another four referrals for a domestic homicide review have been received 2018-19 - criminal justice process not concluded.

² 2017-18

Challenges

Domestic and sexual violence and abuse is highly sensitive and personal. The issues carry many implications for victim-survivors, perpetrators and other family members, colleagues, neighbours and friends. The prevalence of judgement and fears of further harm thread through the challenges faced in seeking to reduce it.

These are high volume occurrences, often happening repeatedly and over a prolonged amount of time in what should be trusted and safe relationships.

In general discussion, much emphasis is often placed on the need for the people involved to 'separate', yet this is often the trigger for homicide and no indication that the abuse will stop.

Data can be difficult to collect and analyse but we have a growing understanding in Leicester of the needs and vulnerabilities people are sharing and what makes a difference in terms of services meeting their needs.

What comes through repeatedly from victim-survivors is the need for people to listen and not judge them, and for them to understand the realities and impact of domestic and sexual abuse and violence. People do not want to have to build up the courage to disclose such personal fears and experiences to be then blamed for them, or be told to repeat them to someone else, or be dismissed.

What can be done

Leicester partners are working together with Leicestershire & Rutland to develop an overarching strategic vision. There is also work on undertaking further joint commissions of specialist services.

Leicester has an active Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference system, for those victim-survivors identified as at highest risk of homicide or serious injury, aiming to improve the safety of those 'top 5%' of cases.

There is a comprehensive training package for local practitioners provided by UAVA through the four contracts the city council manages. This creates around 800 training spaces each year.

As those affected do not often tell any official agency, even a helpline, we need to reach the friends and family members they might confide in more easily. To this end, the role of community champions becomes very important. Community champions training opportunities are built in to the training programme.

After 'friends and family', health agencies are the most commonly accessed avenue for help and support. We need to make sure that all agencies can provide reassurance that their staff can identify and respond appropriately to domestic and sexual violence and abuse.

UAVA provide support and information to such large numbers of people due to their volunteer base and the other partner agencies working closely with them but many more agencies and individuals need to improve their response to domestic and sexual violence and abuse to make a significant impact on the harm these issues reflect, particularly around prevention.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Health and Wellbeing Board is requested to:

1. Note the risks to the health and well-being of people of Leicester that domestic and sexual violence and abuse present and the value of having effective provision.
2. Support awareness raising, identification, better data and more efficient pathways for those affected by sexual and domestic violence and abuse.
3. Establish clear links and accountability with and to the Vulnerabilities Executive in relation to the Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy.