

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET BOARD

15th February 2017

**Report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services
K. Jones**

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected:All Wards

**Consultative Draft of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse
& Sexual Violence Strategy**

Purpose of Report

To seek authority to consult on the draft Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy for Neath Port Talbot County Borough.

Executive Summary

The Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 aims to improve arrangements for the prevention of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence; improve arrangements for the protection of victims of such abuse and violence; and requires the appointment of a National Adviser on gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

This places a new general duty on local authorities to have regard (along with all other relevant matters) to the need to remove or minimise any factors which increase the risk of violence against women and girls or, exacerbate the impact of such violence on victims.

The Act also places a duty on local authorities and health boards to produce and publish a local strategy for the local authority area and then to take reasonable steps to achieve the objectives set out in the local strategy.

Attached, at Appendix 1 is the Draft Strategy which has been prepared by a strengthened multi-agency partnership, chaired by Councillor Alan Lockyer.

Background

The Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 aims to improve arrangements for the prevention of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence; improve arrangements for the protection of victims of such abuse and violence; improve support for people affected by such abuse and violence; and requires the appointment of a National Adviser on gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

The Act creates a number of new responsibilities for local authorities in Wales including a duty to prepare and publish a strategy for the local authority's area, jointly with the relevant health board.

Over the last twelve months, and in accordance with requirements set out in statutory guidance, the Domestic Abuse Strategy Group has been disbanded and replaced by a new multi-agency Leadership Group. There has been sustained senior commitment to the Group over the last twelve months and there has been excellent co-operation in developing the attached Strategy.

The Strategy follows the structure of the Welsh Government's National Strategy for Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence, enabling the local partnership to demonstrate its contribution to delivering the national policy objectives established by the Welsh Government. It includes all of the areas of activity that are set out in various statutory guidance documents, but most importantly, it identifies the strengths and challenges for this area and sets out a series of achievable actions to help us to achieve our long term vision:

“To prevent and eradicate violence against women, domestic abuse sexual violence by promoting equality, safety, respect and independence to enable everyone to live free from abuse and the attitudes that perpetuate it.”

Key Objectives

There are seven objectives set out in the Strategy:

1. Increase awareness and challenge attitudes towards violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence
2. Increase awareness in children and young people of the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships and that abusive behaviour is always wrong
3. Increased focus on holding perpetrators to account and provide opportunities to change their behaviour based on victim safety
4. Make early intervention and prevention a priority
5. Relevant professionals are trained to provide effective, timely and appropriate response to victims
6. Provide victims with equal access to appropriately resourced, high quality, needs led, strength based, gender responsive services across Neath Port Talbot
7. Increased focus on improving the recognition of and responses to violence against, women, domestic abuse and sexual violence in all criminal justice proceedings.

Consultation

A wide range of stakeholders were consulted during the development of the Strategy. It is proposed that a further three month consultation and engagement exercise be undertaken to ensure that Strategy has wide support.

The form of consultation will include an on-line survey, face to face consultation with survivors, a partnership workshop and distribution of the draft Strategy through various partnership networks, including the Think Family Partnership, Supporting People Regional Commissioning Group, Area Planning Board and the Public Services Board.

Financial Impact

There are no new identified recurring revenue resources identified to support the new duties and responsibilities summarised in this report. Consequently, any proposed changes will require a refocusing of existing resource or acquisition of new funding streams.

Equality Impact Assessment

The Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to “pay due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;

- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share it.”

The subject of this report is legislation that is aimed at gender-based violence and consequently the impact should be positive as far as the protected characteristic of gender is concerned. Local research also identifies children as being affected by domestic abuse and consequently the impact of the legislation is likely to be positive for the protected characteristic of age.

An Equality Impact Assessment is being developed and will be updated following the consultation and will be available when the final strategy is presented to the Policy and Resources Cabinet Board for approval.

Workforce Impact

The full workforce impacts of the legislation have not yet been identified. The Act & Strategy will have potential implications on the Council's existing workplace domestic abuse policy. The Act will impact on commissioning activities that fall within the scope of the act which in turn may have particular workforce implications and there is a requirement to deliver training that meets the requirements set out in the National Training Framework. Other workforce impacts identified will be reported to Members when progress reports are made.

Legal Impact

The preparation and publication of a strategy will ensure the Council discharges its statutory duty as required within the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015.

Crime and Disorder Impact

The Council has a legal duty under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to carry out all its various functions with “due regard to the need to prevent Crime and Disorder in its area”.

The strategy will assist the Council in discharging its duty to prevent gender-based crime and disorder in its area.

Risk Management

There is a risk of non-compliance with the duties introduced by the Act if sufficient resources are not provided to local authorities to cover the costs of the associated activities. This risk has been mitigated by ensuring proposed actions within this first Strategy can be delivered within existing resource, albeit there may need to be a refocusing of how those resources are best used, or they are actions that partners consider there is a strong potential to draw in additional funding.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

The Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services is authorised to commence a three month public consultation exercise on the draft Strategy attached at Appendix 1 and the outcome of that consultation be reported back to the Cabinet Board at an appropriate time.

The Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services is given delegated authority to make any further changes that are necessary prior to final publication of the draft Strategy and which do not materially change the content of the strategy.

Reason for Proposed Decision

To provide formal authority to the relevant officer to take the actions necessary to secure compliance by the Council with the new duties under Section 5 (1) of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015.

Implementation of Decision

The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period.

Appendices

1. Draft Neath Port Talbot Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy

List of Background Papers

Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015

Tackling Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence: A Collaborative Commissioning Toolkit for Services in Wales

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