

# **NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **Community Safety and Public Protection Sub Committee**

### **Report of the Assistant Chief Executive & Chief Digital Officer**

K. Jones

#### **For Information**

**Wards Affected:** All Wards

### **Annual Report on the Healthy Relationships for Stronger Communities Strategy – Implementing the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015**

#### **Purpose of Report**

1. To present the Annual Report on the Healthy Relationships for Stronger Communities Strategy (2016-2019), implementing the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015

#### **Executive Summary**

2. Overall, we have made good progress in the first year of the implementation of the strategy. Our partnership has been strengthened with the VAWDASV Leadership Group continuing to oversee the work, establishing key areas of the Strategy to prioritise and take forward
3. Work has commenced in the following areas of the strategy:
  - Communications & Engagement;
  - Children & Young People Services;
  - Development of a new service model;
  - Staff Training; and
  - High Risk Victim Services.
4. The overall summary for the year is as follows:
  - The Communications & Engagement sub group has developed a Communications Plan to steer the work of the

group, ensuring all engagement with members of the public is coordinated and effective. They will continue raise awareness of VAWDASV and the services available, with members of the public and with local employers;

- Various successful campaigns were delivered via the Communications and Engagement group including;
  - i. White Ribbon Day
  - ii. International Women's Day
  - iii. Well-being Workshop 'It's Your World' at Ysgol Bae Baglan;
- The Children & Young People Sub-Group has conducted a mapping exercise, investigating all local services available for children affected by VAWDASV. The findings will be shared at an event during September 2018. The roll out of suitable programmes across schools in NPT continues to develop;
- The Accommodation Review Sub-Group has explored other potential service models for adoption within NPT. This work will be completed by end of summer 2018, which aims to modernise services for victims, offering more choice but at a reduction in cost;
- VAWDASV training is being rolled out to all staff within the authority. The 50% target for year one has been met. We continue to work with Welsh Government on the upcoming roll out of other aspects of the National Training Framework, although there has still been no additional funding to resource this requirement; and
- The review of high risk victim services is drawing to a close. This work has resulted in an expansion of the Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) provision and reform of the way the service currently operates. Engagement rates with victims have increased from 50% to over 80% within the last year.

The VAWDASV Leadership Group has recently met to review progress so far and discuss priorities for the next year.

## **Background**

5. 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.
6. The Act created 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.
7. In accordance with requirements set out in statutory guidance, the multi-agency Leadership Group was formed, with sustained senior commitment to the Group and excellent co-operation in developing the Healthy Relationships for Stronger Communities Strategy.
8. 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 (or in some instances drafts of the statutory) 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 by promoting equality, safety, respect and independence to enable everyone to live free from abuse and the attitudes that perpetuate it.”*

## **Key Objectives**

9. There are seven objectives set out in the Strategy:
  - Increase awareness and challenge attitudes towards violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence;

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

### **Financial Impact**

10. There were no new recurring revenue resources identified to support the duties and responsibilities summarised in this report. The progress so far has been delivered despite a challenging financial backdrop.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

11. 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.”
12. An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken during the development of the Healthy Relationships for Stronger Communities Strategy. There are no further issues identified that require further addressing here.

## **Workforce Impact**

13. Further implementation of the strategy will impact on commissioning activities that fall within the scope of the Act which in turn may have particular workforce implications. These will be reported to Members as and when they are identified.

## **Legal Impact**

14. The development and implementation of the Strategy ensures the Council discharges its statutory duty as contained 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 duties introduced by the legislation subject of this report assist the Council in discharging its duty to prevent gender-based crime and disorder in its area.

## **Risk Management**

There is a continued 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 can be delivered within existing resource, albeit there may need to be a refocusing of how those resources are best used.

## **Recommendations**

1. It is recommended that the committee note the progress made since the Strategy was approved.

## **Reason for Proposed Decision**

To assist the Scrutiny Sub-Committee in holding partners to account for delivery of the Strategy.

## **Implementation of Decision**

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

## **Appendices**

1. Annual Report of the Neath Port Talbot Healthy Relationships For Stronger Communities Strategy (2016-2019)

## **List of Background Papers**

1. Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015
2. Healthy Relationships for Stronger Communities Strategy (2016-2019)

## **Officer Contact**

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