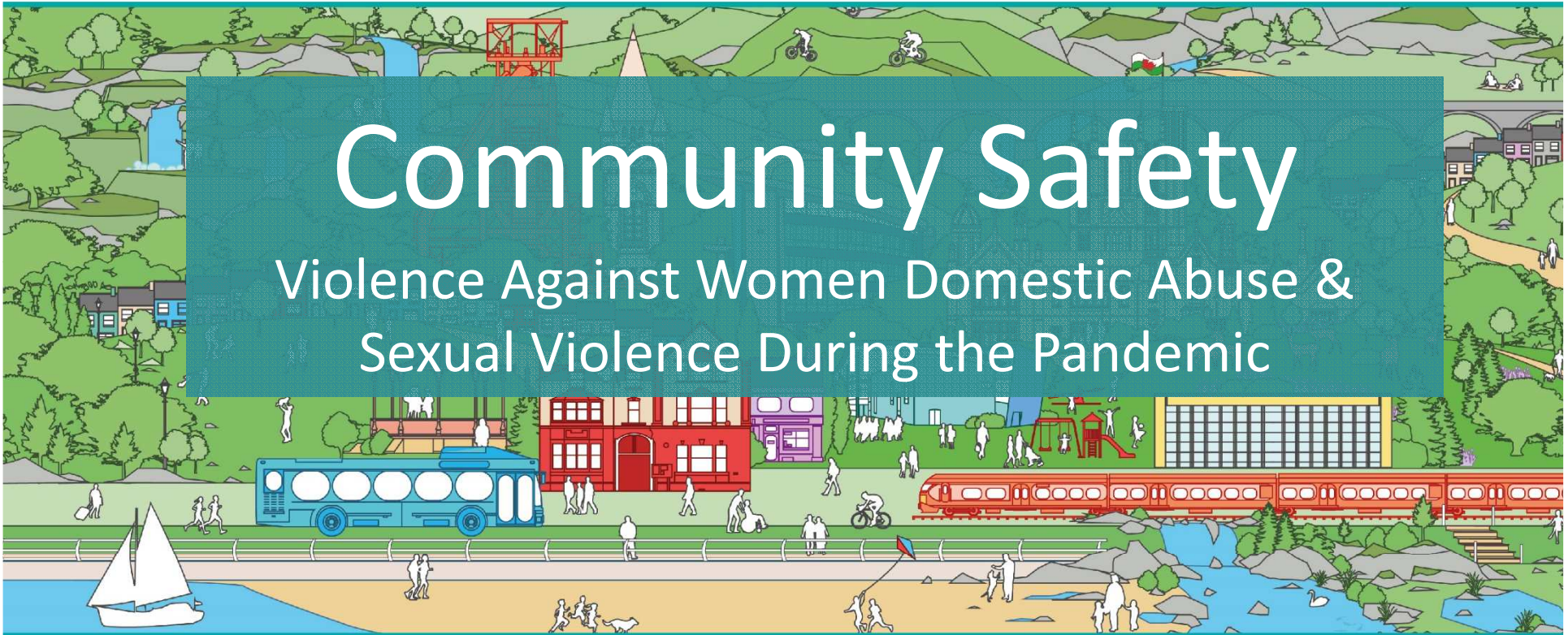




Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

Community Safety

Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse &
Sexual Violence During the Pandemic





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OFFICERS

- Elinor Wellington – Principal Officer for Community Safety
- Lisa Potterton – VAWDASV Policy
- Allyson Fisher – Senior Independent Domestic Violence Advisor

Domestic Abuse

- Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, there was concern over an anticipated 'spike' in domestic abuse at a local and national level
- There was little time to prepare or adapt services for this expected demand.
- From the introduction of the UK lockdown in March 2020, local support services saw a 40% increase in demand.
- This included our Independent Domestic Violence Advisors service who specialise in supporting our highest risk victims.
- Rather than a 'spike' in demand, the increase remained consistent across all services

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Domestic Abuse

- An extraordinary Leadership Group was called to speak to partners about their immediate concerns, demands, as well as funding and staffing matters
- Services acted upon their resilience plans and tried to adapt services to home working, whilst maintaining a presence in our local refuges to support those at greatest risk.
- Additional deep cleaning services were required, as well as PPE and appropriate risk assessments to safeguard staff and residents alike.



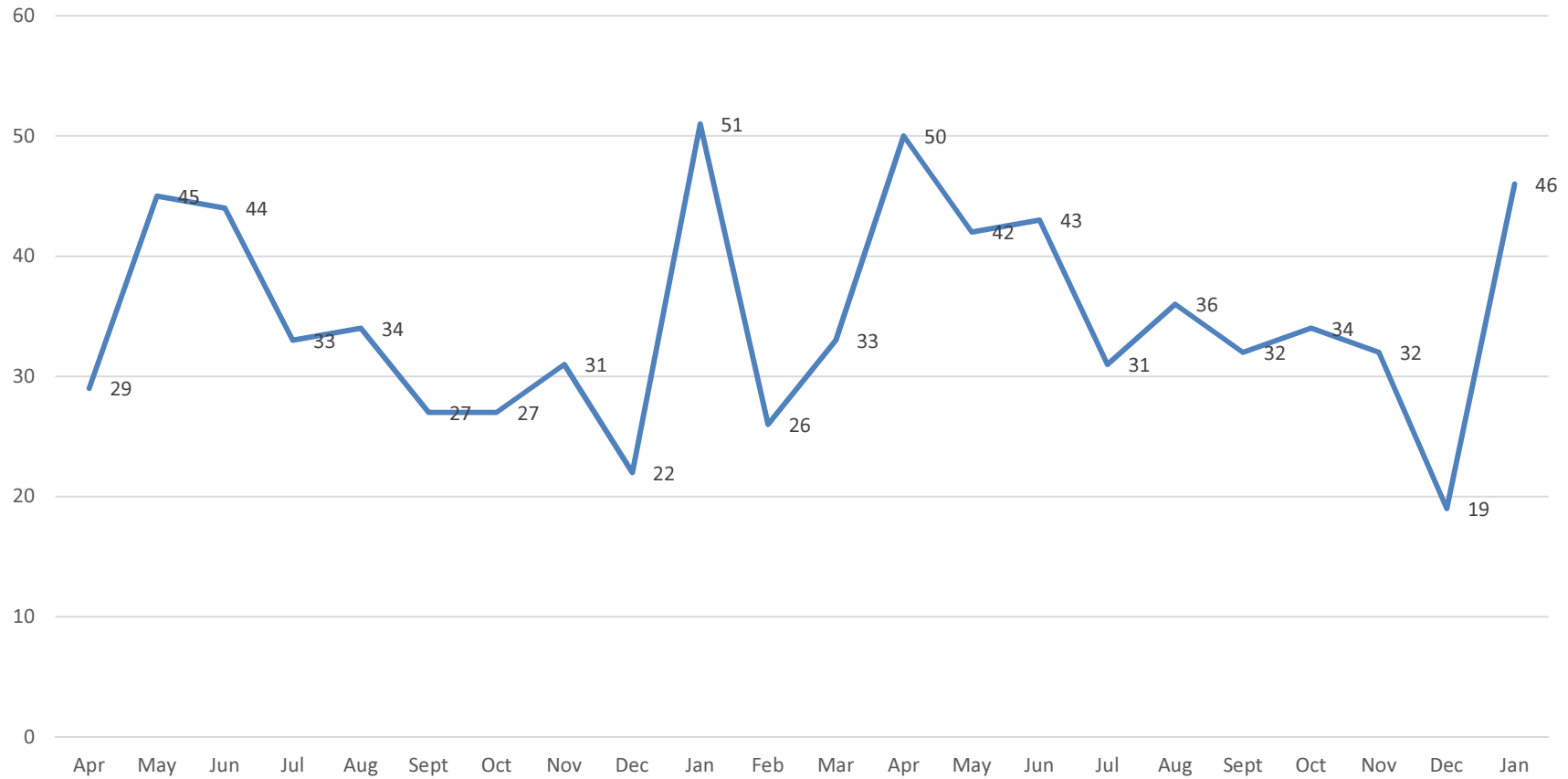
Domestic Abuse

- The nature of the violence being experienced was more severe and escalating far more quickly than what is 'typically' seen
- New referrals were received from those not known to services before, and were immediately being considered high risk
- Far more disclosures were being made in health settings, as people had to attend appointments alone
- Services faced further additional challenges because all housing allocations were put on hold and cases were not being heard in court
- Cases open to the IDVA's could not be 'stepped down' to local specialist providers and this started to generate a backlog



IDVA Referrals

IDVA Referrals (April 2019 - Jan 2021)



Domestic Abuse – IDVA Service

- The IDVA team mobilised the service from home
- The level of service was well maintained despite not having access to Niche (SWP database)
- Despite the challenges, engagement rates were up to 67%, which is exceptionally high when compared to previous years
- For some victims, they felt better able to engage through the lockdown period
- However, some of our repeat victims with complex needs did not access services as routinely – there is a piece of work to be done to establish the reasons



Domestic Abuse - Funding

- During 2020/21 Welsh Government awarded an additional £130k of funding to VAWDASV services in NPT, to assist with the additional demand and pressures caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- However, this money came in various streams, with differing criteria
- Some examples of how this funding was used;
 - Our Communications and Engagement Group further promoted local services to reassure people that help was still available.
 - To train local specialist providers staff on working with perpetrators
 - To contribute to the employment of 2 additional IDVA's.

Domestic Abuse

- To support local refuges and accommodation with PPE, cleaning products and any additional facilities to help them better respond to the new needs placed on services and to keep residents safer
- The Police and Crime Commissioner awarded funding to employ a regional DRIVE IDVA, to support the roll out of the DRIVE perpetrator programme in NPT.
- Housing Support Grant has been used to purchase additional target hardening equipment for victims, including window locks, panic alarms, security lights etc.

VAWDASV Strategy

- In April 2020 the new NPT VAWDASV strategy 'Healthy Relationships for Stronger Communities' was introduced
- As a result of the pandemic, an addendum to the strategy outlined the areas that could be progressed, and those that may need to be postponed temporarily
- The Leadership Group and its sub groups continue to make excellent progress on the key objectives in the strategy, despite having additional demands and challenges to address;



VAWDASV Strategy

Communications & Engagement

The sub group has mobilised. Leaflets and banners to promote local services have been widely distributed.

Relationship and Sexuality Education

Lesson delivery was paused during the pandemic and key events like Crucial Crew were paused. Plans to restart these are underway.

Perpetrator Work

Ongoing work with PCC on Drive roll out. Continued discussions on the expansion of Swansea Equilibrium Programme into NPT

VAWDASV Strategy

Training

Work continues on the roll out of Group 2 training across Swansea and Neath Port Talbot. Group1 eLearning remains available while face to face delivery is paused

Courts & Criminal Justice

Courts have now reopened and cases are being heard. Our IDVA staff hope to return to court soon to support victims with the process. Developments underway for increased remote evidence facilities across Wales.

Latest Developments

Safe Spaces for Women

Following the recent murder of Sarah Everard in Clapham, and the subsequent public outcry on Women's safety in public, a Task & Finish group has been convened to;

- design and implement a #SafeSpaceNPT campaign,
- consider safety apps,
- Consider training for hospitality staff and taxi drivers,
- Develop awareness raising, including in education settings and;
- consider additional ways to work with perpetrators

Latest Developments

Children and Young Peoples Services

Following the increase in Domestic Abuse referrals for adults, there was some concern that referrals into specialist CYP services did not reflect this. A Task and Finish group was convened to;

- Look at demands into services and offer reassurance to the Leadership Group that appropriate referrals were being made
- Establish whether Social Services have delivered more in-house throughout the pandemic
- Identify whether some local specialist providers have launched new services during the pandemic that have not been as widely promoted as they would have pre-covid
- Complete a mapping exercise of all services and develop an information leaflet on available services and their criteria for wider circulation





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Thank You.
Any Questions?

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