



CABINET REPORT

Report Title	Cabinet response to Scrutiny Panel – Interpersonal Violence
---------------------	--

AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Cabinet Meeting Date:	9 December 2015
Key Decision:	NO
Within Policy:	YES
Policy Document:	NO
Directorate:	Customers & Communities
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Cllr Anna King
Ward(s)	All

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to respond to the recommendations set out in the Overview and Scrutiny document constructed between May 2014 and March 2015 presented to cabinet in March 2015.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the recommendations included in the Overview and Scrutiny report “Interpersonal Violence” are accepted.
- 2.2 That the Scrutiny Panel are formally congratulated for their commitment to reviewing Northampton Borough Council’s response in addressing issues around interpersonal violence (domestic abuse, sexual abuse and child exploitation), centring on domestic abuse, and the high quality and comprehensive report produced, and are thanked for the time and effort given to produce it.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

3.1.1 The Review took place between May 2014 and March 2015, and the Panel received evidence both written and spoken, from a variety of expert advisors. The purpose of the Scrutiny Panel was to review Northampton Borough Council's response in addressing issues around interpersonal violence (domestic abuse, sexual abuse and child exploitation), centring on domestic abuse

- To clearly identify existing domestic abuse services and partnerships covering Northampton
- To consider and assess the roles and responsibilities of the various organisations involved in addressing domestic violence including the Police.
- To identify any gaps in service provision in order to assess the adequacy for supporting victims of domestic abuse
- To make recommendations for future development of services
- To identify the underlying causes of domestic violence and preventative measures
- To identify the responsibilities of the Local Authority, for example strategic housing
- To identify funding mechanisms and how this could be used to alleviate the problem

3.2 Response to Overview and Scrutiny Recommendations

3.2.1 All 17 recommendations included in the report have been considered by Community Safety, Housing and Wellbeing (including Northampton Partnership Homes) and the representatives from the voluntary sector.

Cabinet's response to the 17 recommendations in the Overview and Scrutiny report are as follows:

1. In recognising the success of the information stand hosted by the Scrutiny Panel as part of International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, a similar event is held annually in the town centre in a location with a consulting room should attendees need advice and support.

Response:

Event is arranged for week commencing 23/11/2015 in the One Stop Shop. Sunflower Centre now offer drop in service every Tuesdays and Thursdays in One Stop Shop, and staff can also make direct referrals to Women's Aid.

2. Education Information Packs on domestic abuse preventative services are disseminated to BME Groups, schools, universities, faith groups and community groups in Northampton prior to Domestic Violence Awareness Raising Week 2015.

Response:

This sits with the Countywide IPV group, on which there is NBC representation. Information and awareness raising programmes are service/audience specific.

3. In recognising the good practice undertaken by Northampton Borough Council in funding domestic abuse services; Northampton Borough Council (NBC) should take this into consideration when allocating funding in future years and share best practice with other funding bodies.

Response:

As well as encouraging joint commissioning and the pooling of budgets, NBC is playing a key role in working with commissioners to ensure that domestic abuse services are fit for purpose and sustainable.

4. The countywide definition of vulnerable adults is adopted by Northampton Borough Council.

Response:

This has been adopted, and Countywide approach is followed.

5. The Cabinet Member with responsibility for education at Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) is contacted and asked whether education, advice, information and support regarding healthy relationships and personal safety can be included in the school curriculum.

Response:

Included within the PSHE programme for schools. Specific awareness raising sessions on healthy relationships and personal safety have been funded covering Domestic Abuse and Child Sexual Exploitation.

6. Public awareness of domestic abuse is increased and services that are available to tackle the issue and support victims:
 - Review and update contents of relevant pages of NBC website to ensure it is informative and 'user friendly'

Response:

Web pages reviewed and updated in July 2015

- Provide effective and updated publicity throughout the Borough via poster, leaflets and contact cards

Response:

approach is co-ordinated at a countywide level. Updated information/leaflets will be distributed throughout NBC

- Support NADA awareness raising campaigns for the county

Response:

NBC representative sits on NADA and supports the delivery of campaigns and the bi-annual conference.

- Training for all Councillors on Interpersonal Violence is delivered and an information booklet or webpage is produced

Response:

Training to be arranged. This will be provided by the Countywide, IPV training strand. Web pages containing relevant information are available on NBC website.

7. NBC's Domestic Abuse Policy is revised and updated to reflect the new countywide Interpersonal Violence Strategy; which is currently out to consultation.

Response:

A new countywide Domestic Abuse Strategy & Plan has now been approved and NBC is represented on the Implementation Group. Although there are plans for a new Northampton Domestic Abuse Strategy, NBC's priority is to support and promote a Countywide approach. It is leading on the development of a Countywide 'safe accommodation' initiative.

8. The statistical data collected in respect of domestic abuse is reviewed to ensure that it is robust and meaningful. NBC considers the effectiveness of current data collection in relation to domestic abuse and encourages all relevant departments to review and contribute by the end of December 2015.

Response:

All current data sets to be reviewed and recommendations for future collection to be made.

Funding

9. It is established whether NBC has central funding to access interpreter services, to aid communication with victims whose first language is not English.

Response:

Interpretation and translation services are already subscribed to through Communities & Partnerships and can be utilised by all departments.

10. Due to the relocation of the Sunflower Centre, Northampton Borough Council provides them with accommodation in the One Stop Shop for drop in sessions.

Response:

Completed, Sunflower Centre hold drop-in sessions in One Stop Shop on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

11. A central budget to support the Sanctuary Scheme and the target hardening for victims properties is identified to enable victims to remain in

their own home.

Response:

All Boroughs and Districts have now signed up to a new Countywide funding arrangement that will require social landlords to meet the cost of Sanctuaries and target hardening in their properties, and the relevant Homelessness Team to meet the cost of Sanctuaries and target hardening in the homes of private tenants and owner occupiers.

Training Programme

12. NBC develops a sustainable domestic abuse awareness raising training programme for Councillors, managers and all staff. This programme is also offered to neighbouring Local Authorities.

Response:

This is to be developed in partnership with Countywide group. Please also see recommendation 6, bullet point 4.

Housing Services, Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH)

13. It is recommended that the conditions of Tenancy Agreements are fully explained to new and prospective tenants to ensure their understanding and compliance.

Response:

Approach is victim centred and support is offered throughout the process, including ensuring they are resettled in their new home. On-going support is offered and welfare checks completed for at least the first 12 month of any new tenancy.

14. Dual Tenancies are encouraged and staff trained to recognise the implications of cultural differences.

Response:

NPH is currently reviewing its policy and procedures with regard to the ways they deal with the victims of Domestic Abuse, both for tenants and those non-tenants applying for housing.

15. In recognising that when moving from a crisis and safe accommodation to a permanent address; women often have no furniture or equipment; a Transition Strategy is introduced. Information is provided detailing where household items can be obtained, for example Charity Link and Spencer Contact.

Response:

At the sign up interview an incoming tenant's situation is assessed and if needed a referral is made to Spencer Contact who will offer three items of furniture as a donation. All victims are supported by NPH, and resettlement is part of the support plan and necessary referrals are made to support agencies. If required, referrals are also made to Charity Link.

Housing Solutions, Northampton Borough Council

16. In recognising that new people to the area; and individuals with no recourse to public funds, are offered advice, support and given information.

Response:

NBC's Housing and Wellbeing Service is actively encouraging and promoting an effective multi agency response to domestic abuse in the borough in order to ensure that people affected by domestic abuse are able to access the advice, support and information they need.

17. Housing Solutions, NBC, takes responsibility for reports of domestic abuse and ensure all staff are trained and able to respond.

Response:

NBC's Housing and Wellbeing Service takes all reports of domestic abuse seriously and a number of its housing advisers lead on domestic abuse issues. Specialist training is planned, for all Housing Options and Advice staff, to ensure that all staff are trained and able to respond.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

4.1.1 There are none specifically

4.2 Resources and Risk

4.2.1 Any financial implications will be met through existing budgets.

4.3 Legal

4.3.1 There are no legal implications

4.4 Equality and Health

4.4.1 There are no specific new equality implications in adopting these recommendations.

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

4.5.1 The Panel took evidence from a wide range of Stakeholders and Councillors from Northampton Borough Council

Cabinet Member for Community Safety
Cabinet Member for Housing
Director of Customers & Communities
Director of Housing Management (NPH)
Head of Housing and Wellbeing
Northampton Women's Forum
Northamptonshire Police

Northamptonshire County Council
Sunflower Centre
Women's Aid
EVE (formerly Nene Valley Christian Refuge)
Relate
NRICC
NIFF
BME SRP

4.6 How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes

4.6.1 Northampton Borough Council Corporate Plan – Invest in safer, Cleaner Neighbourhoods; Promoting Health & Wellbeing

4.7 Other Implications

4.7.1 The report and its recommendations have policy implications in relation to interpersonal violence.

5. Background Papers

5.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee report – Interpersonal Violence (March 2015)

Julie Seddon,
Director of Customers & Communities
Ext: 7379