

**BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE – EQUALITIES**

**22 AUGUST 2011**

**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES**  
**SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR TACKLING DOMESTIC ABUSE**  
**AND IDENTIFIED STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Cabinet Committee of the services available for tackling Domestic Abuse; and inform the Cabinet Committee of the strategic priorities that are emerging in the County Borough of Bridgend.

**2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority**

- 2.1 The Community Safety Partnership Crime and Disorder Plan supports the aims of the Bridgend Community Strategy theme, 'Bright Future, Strong Communities', by helping to build strong and positive relationships between people.

**3. Background**

- 3.1 Nationally, domestic abuse affects 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men. Domestic abuse can be physical, psychological or sexual abuse and stalking. Some definitions also include financial abuse. In Bridgend domestic abuse is addressed in unison with violent crime, and it is this aspect which is a strategic priority for the Community Safety Partnership Crime and Disorder Plan.

- 3.2 The interconnectedness of domestic violence issues with other aspects of community wellbeing is reflected by domestic abuse being included in many of Bridgend County Borough Council's plans and strategies; including the Children and Young People's Framework Strategy, Substance Misuse Strategy and Action Plan, Housing Strategy and the Equalities Plan.

**4. Current situation / proposal**

## **Referrals**

- 4.1 The number of domestic violence referrals received by the Police has remained broadly consistent for several years. Analysis shows a higher prevalence in Bridgend's valley areas, but it is widely acknowledged that this type of crime is under-reported, and that social, cultural and economic factors can affect the levels of reporting in different geographical areas.

Substance misuse, particularly alcohol, is a prevalent factor in many incidents of domestic abuse and other types of violent crime in Bridgend.

## **Support Services**

- 4.2 There are a number of services available to those affected by domestic violence in Bridgend. It is an area in which the third sector plays an important role in service delivery. Bridgend Women's Aid offers free, confidential and non-judgmental services to women and children who have experienced or are experiencing domestic abuse. The services include:

- refuge - supported accommodation with both emotional and practical support in all areas;
- second stage accommodation – flats are available for those who have been in refuge and are now in need of a lower level of support but still awaiting social housing;
- outreach - support for women and children in the community, offering practical and emotional support with difficulties resulting from domestic abuse;
- pattern changing programmes - to help women understand the beliefs held by abusive men and in doing so, recognize beliefs they have shared;
- group work with children and young people - addressing issues raised where children and young people are living in or have witnessed domestic abuse; and
- training and awareness raising - staff are available to provide awareness raising initiatives to the general public and training to agencies on domestic abuse.

- 4.3 The Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) provides support to male or female high risk victims whilst they are going through the criminal or civil justice systems. The support includes constructing a safety plan; completing an in-depth risk assessment; and signposting to relevant partners and agencies. The IDVA post is funded through a combination of Home Office funding and Community Safety Grant via the Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

Hafan Cymru provides temporary accommodation for women fleeing domestic abuse and is funded through the Supporting People Revenue Grant Programme contracted directly by Welsh Government. The service is

4.4 currently exclusively housing based, but discussions with BCBC have highlighted the need to provide floating support to women who wish to remain in their own homes. A remodeling of the service is currently being explored.

4.5 The Wallich provides 14 Units of temporary accommodation for women fleeing domestic abuse with complex needs. This is a cross boundary project that supports Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea Local Authorities. These services are also funded through the Welsh Government's Supporting People Revenue Grant.

4.6 A Specialist Domestic Violence Court (SDVC) has been established in Bridgend. Partners include the police, prosecutors, court staff, the probation service and specialist support services for victims. Agencies work together to identify, track and risk assess domestic violence cases, support victims of domestic violence and share information better so that more offenders are brought to justice.

High risk referrals are reviewed at the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).

4.7 Domestic violence issues are also being addressed as part of the Connecting Families project: the Community Safety Partnership is making available 8 hours per week of advocacy, advice and support, to assist those families with complex needs, where domestic violence is a risk factor.

### **Priorities**

4.8 A Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women Strategic Delivery Plan is currently in development by the Community Safety Partnership. It will set out the priority actions to be delivered over the next 3 years. A key challenge for the plan will be addressing areas of emerging concern such as stalking and male victims of domestic abuse, as well as sustaining existing services during a period of funding reductions from central government.

4.9 Added to this, the services currently provided in Bridgend are predominantly reactive, and initial thinking suggests a need to reprioritise in favour of early intervention and prevention through:

- sustained target hardening and safety provisions;
- a greater focus on service provision for pattern changing initiatives for the victims, perpetrators' programmes, and increased access for young people; and
- Increasing reporting and awareness raising of support services available.

4.10

Effective recording and monitoring, so that both levels of abuse and the relative effectiveness of interventions can be measured. This is likely to a key priority for the CSP.

## **Collaborative Working**

- 4.11 To build a more integrated approach Safer Bridgend and Safer Vale CSP's have formally agreed to fund a single Domestic Abuse Coordinators post using the Wales Government ring fenced grant. Feedback from partners to this approach has been very positive.

## **Governance**

- 4.12 Tackling domestic abuse in Bridgend County Borough cannot be achieved by any single organisation. An active partnership approach between the public, private and community and voluntary sectors through the Local Service Board and Community Safety Partnership is an essential element of the successful delivery plan when it is agreed.

- 4.13 The Community Safety Partnership Executive Board has overall responsibility for monitoring the progress of the action plan. The Domestic Violence Forum will be responsible for taking forward the actions in the delivery plan, reporting to Executive Board.

- 4.14 Actions that fall to the Council to deliver, will feed into departmental business plans, and will be monitored as part of the Council's performance monitoring regime.

## **5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules**

- 5.1 None

## **6. Equality Impact Assessment**

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed on the Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women Strategic Delivery Plan 2011 – 2014.

## **7. Financial Implications**

- 7.1 Support services for domestic violence are highly grant dependant, and therefore vulnerable to fluctuations in funding.

## **8. Recommendation**

- 8.1 It is recommended that Cabinet Equality Committee note the services currently available to tackle domestic abuse and the emerging priorities for the next 3 years.

## **9. Background Documents**

- 9.1 Recorded domestic abuse related figures appendix 1.

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