

Proposal for Domestic Violence Commissioning in Partnership in Buckinghamshire

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1.0 Summary

This paper proposes adopting a new approach to commissioning Domestic Violence services in Buckinghamshire. Using the governance framework of the Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board to oversee the process, the proposal is to develop a comprehensive commissioning plan designed to deliver the partnership outcomes for the people of Buckinghamshire.

2.0 Background

Domestic violence and abuse is a truly cross cutting issue across the services provided by Buckinghamshire County Council and partners. There are a number of commissioners across the geography of Buckinghamshire who are commissioning services to respond to the needs of people affected by DVA - many with different contractual relationships, different performance measures and monitoring requirements.

A multi disciplinary discussion has been ongoing to seek a more integrated approach to developing a coherent and effective commissioning strategy to respond to domestic violence and abuse in Buckinghamshire.

The cross cutting nature of domestic violence manifests itself in the fact that it is a concern across a number of cabinet member portfolios. These include: -

Communities and Engagement	Cllr Martin Phillips
Deputy Leader	Cllr Mike Appleyard
Children and Young People	Cllr Val Letheren
Adults and Family Wellbeing	Cllr Patricia Birchley

The proposal is to develop an integrated and coherent approach to DVA commissioning in Bucks to enable all the discussion to occur in one place and with the benefit of partnership consideration. The current Buckinghamshire Domestic Abuse Strategy outlines holistic approach for victims, perpetrators and children and proposes working to the Co-ordinated Community Response Model which helps avoid duplication, enables synchronisation of funding and effective inter-agency management of risk. .

3.0 Commissioning for outcomes

Domestic violence expertise is provided at the County wide level through the DVA Co-ordinator post in Bucks CC, and Senior Community Safety Manager. Both posts sit within the County Council's Community Safety Team. The capacity provides Buckinghamshire Local Authorities with an in depth specialist knowledge and understanding of all aspects of domestic violence. The Community Safety Team works in partnership with colleagues from all the responsible authorities to ensure that national policy and strategy is appropriately implemented in Buckinghamshire.

The team has had a number of targets over recent years which relate to increasing reporting of DV, reducing repeat victimisation and most recently: -

“Reducing the level of risk of those clients who are supported by an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate”

From the community safety perspective services have been commissioned to deliver a range of outcomes. These include; -

- to increase access to support for vulnerable victims of DV with a view to reducing their level of assessed risk
- provision to work with perpetrators to challenge and change their abusive behaviour and reduce their reoffending
- to provide training programmes which will increase in the level of knowledge, awareness and confidence of professionals working with vulnerable people in Buckinghamshire to respond appropriately to domestic violence

CYP portfolio colleagues have been involved in commissioning services to address the needs of young people who are direct or indirect victims of domestic violence. A range of provisions have been commissioned with a view to delivering Every Child Matters outcomes:

- Be Healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy and Achieve
- Make a Positive Contribution
- Achieve Economic Wellbeing

Services include:

- Child centred activities for children and young people resident in Women’s Refuges
 - Therapeutic Play sessions for children who have been exposed to domestic abuse
 - *Outreach services for women who have experienced domestic abuse
 - *Freedom programme for women who have experienced domestic abuse
- *Research indicates that when the non abusive parent is offered appropriate support outcomes for their children improve.

A review of the primary parental factors in relation to the initiation of Child Protection Plans (CPPs) recently indicated that Domestic Violence and Abuse and substance misuse were the two most prevalent factors which contributed to a child protection plan. A key outcome from the perspective of CYP would be to reduce the numbers of children subject to CPPs.

Under the Supporting People framework refuge provision is commissioned for vulnerable victims of domestic violence and abuse. The outcomes include:-

- Provision of outreach /specialised support services for those who have experienced DVA, for all levels of risk, including Asian outreach and support for those who experience Honour Based Violence (HBV) and Forced Marriage (FM).
- Provision of safe residential units for victims of DVA, and their children, to escape harm.

Provision of Sanctuary Scheme (to all tenures) to victims for DVA to enable victims to stay in their own home

4. 0 Opportunities for Commissioning in Partnership

We have an opportunity to utilise the current structures that exist which can fulfil our requirements without adding a further strategic planning burden to already stretched organisations. With this in mind, the proposal is to look at the Safer and Stronger Partnership Board (SSBPB) as the overarching host Partnership Board for the Domestic Violence Strategy.

4.1 The Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board is a well established Partnership Board which brings together colleagues from across Buckinghamshire. The membership of the Board is reflective of the Responsible Authorities as articulated in the Crime and Disorder Act 2007.

These are: -

Bucks County Council
Aylesbury vale District Council
Chiltern District Council
Wycombe District Council
South Bucks District Council
Thames Valley Police
Thames Valley Probation
(Voluntary Sector)
NHS Buckinghamshire
Thames Valley Police Authority
Bucks Fire and Rescue Services

Within the membership are included all the Chairs of the District Community Safety Partnerships. The County Council is required to produce an annual community safety agreement, and through the Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board fulfils this in the form of the Safer Bucks Plan which highlights the Board (and the county council's) priorities.

4.2 The Board has identified three priorities and Domestic Violence is one of these. Domestic Violence has been a priority of the SSBPB since the recognition within the Local Area Agreement that domestic violence was a key concern to the Buckinghamshire Strategic Partnership.

4.3 The SSBPB underwent a structural review in Autumn 2010 and aligned its partnership capacity to enable focus on the Board's priorities. This led to the amalgamation of a number of thematic groups to form the Domestic and Community Violence Strategy Group. The functions of the group are to: -

- To provide leadership and vision in overseeing the activity to improve prevention work and reduce violence against the person. To own, drive and contribute to the domestic and community violence agenda. (To lead on the delivery of strategies and action plans in respect of all domestic and community violence themes, e.g. domestic violence, sexual violence, hate crime and gang related activity.)
- To identify partnership priorities in relation to domestic and community violence and outline objectives to meet priorities and commit necessary resources.

- To drive the business going on across the county and ensure co-ordinated action to deliver and monitor the agreed targets.
- To work in partnership to identify and remove barriers to reducing domestic and community violence.
- To foster close co-operation between all stakeholders.
- To receive updates from partner agencies, individuals and delivery/task and finish groups regarding their contribution to reducing domestic and community violence and challenge where necessary.
- To lead on strategic communications.

The Terms of Reference of the group were reviewed earlier in 2011 and the responsibilities quoted in the terms of reference included: -

- To provide countywide strategic leadership and vision to both prevent and reduce incidents of domestic and community violence across Buckinghamshire.
- To agree and monitor key objectives and measurable outcomes for domestic and community violence and its individual themes.
- To implement outcome focused Strategic Action Plans to monitor domestic and community violence effectively across the county and set strategic actions for delivery and task and finish groups.
- To identify opportunities for alignment of activities that will deliver improved outcomes for the population of Buckinghamshire.
- To seek inter-agency commitment and communicate with other partners both within and outside of the community safety arena to enable improved interaction.
- To bring together stakeholders at a strategic level and provide leadership to all agencies to engender co-operation and commitment to reducing community violence.
- To promote the work of the Domestic and Community Violence Strategy Group to the Safer & Stronger Bucks Co-ordinating Group, other sub-groups of the Safer and Stronger Bucks Co-ordinating Group, partners and the community.

5.0 Membership and Attendance

The Domestic and Community Violence Strategy Group was preceded by the Domestic Violence and Abuse Board. The membership has been expanded to maximise the efficiency of the group and cover the wider agenda of hate crime, gangs and other community violence issues as well as having a key focus on Domestic Violence and Abuse.

The current membership includes representation from the following partners: -

Bucks County Council Community Safety
Aylesbury Women's Aid
Wycombe District Council Community Safety
South Bucks DC Community Safety
Aylesbury Vale Rape Crisis
Crown Prosecution Service
Thames Valley Probation Service
Wycombe Rape Crisis
NHS Buckinghamshire
Oxford Health
Bucks County Council Children and Young People Commissioner*
Bucks County Council Accommodation Commissioner*
Buckinghamshire DAAT
Aylesbury Vale District Council Community Safety
Bucks Safeguarding Children's Board
Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Adults
Court User Group
Wycombe Rape Crisis
Cohesion and Equalities BCC
R U Safe, Barnardo's

* Proposed new additions

Most relevant partners sit on this D&CV Board and membership could be amended to address any emergent gaps. This Board will be able to inform and drive future DVA commissioning, with a particular focus on assessing needs, and service design with regard to effectiveness and best practice. In bringing together this broad range of expertise at both strategic and operational level, we will be able to develop a single coherent and effective commissioning strategy led jointly by commissioners in Adults, YP and the Community Safety Team. A needs assessment will have to be undertaken to look at what the local need currently is and scope the likely needs over the next 3-5 years.

6.0 Governance framework

The Safer and Stronger Partnership Board is supported by a Co-ordinating Group which is responsible for receiving detailed information from the subgroups of the board. The Safer and Stronger Bucks Co-ordinating Group is responsible for the development of the Partnership Strategic Assessment which identifies the crime and disorder issues affecting Buckinghamshire. It influences the SSBPB in identifying the priorities for the Safer Bucks Plan and the local priorities adopted by the District based Community Safety Partnerships and their Partnership Plans. The SSBCG provides rigour and challenge to proposals which support the overarching priorities of the board and makes recommendations to the board on deployment of resources. The Co-ordinating group effectively provides a commissioning function (needs assessment through the partnership strategic assessment, and appoints subgroups of the SSBCG to undertake formal procurement processes such as tendering. The SSBCG also monitors performance of projects and initiatives commissioned by the board and exception reports to the Board.

7.0 Proposal

- The SSBPB will commission the Domestic and Community Violence Strategy Group to produce an overarching Domestic Abuse and Violence Commissioning Plan, following a scoping exercise, in partnership with all funding partners, led by Community Safety Team and Children and Young People and Adult Commissioning. A proposal will be developed to look at aligning or pooling BCC budgets to develop a pool or virtual pool to deliver co-ordinated and effective services across Buckinghamshire
- Once the Commissioning Plan is agreed a task and finish subgroup of the SSBCG will be convened to commission DVA services.
- To set up committee reporting processes to the Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board and both Adult's and Children's Safeguarding Boards to consider all areas above and to develop an overarching Domestic and Violence Abuse Commissioning Strategy resulting in pooled budgets to deliver co-ordinated and effective services across Buckinghamshire.