

Open Report on behalf of Les Britzman, Chief Fire Officer

Report to:	Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date:	28 July 2020
Subject:	Response to Domestic Abuse in Lincolnshire

Summary:

This report provides the Committee with an overview and update of the work that is being undertaken in relation to Domestic Abuse (DA) within Lincolnshire, especially in light of COVID-19 and advises on future developments that are likely to have an impact for the county's response to domestic abuse.

Actions Required:

Members of the Committee are invited to consider and comment on the contents of this report, and the Councils role in driving forward the domestic abuse agenda in Lincolnshire.

1. Key areas of activity

Tackling DA and improving the outcomes for those exposed to DA is a core priority for the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership, and Lincolnshire County Council is a key agency in providing both funding and resources to support work in this field; in terms of strategic planning and oversight, commissioning, coordination and administration.

Domestic abuse has a significant impact upon the communities and public services of Lincolnshire. The latest available estimates from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) suggest that for the three year period between April 2013 and March 2016, an estimated 7.0% of the resident population of Lincolnshire aged 16-59 years experienced at least one domestic abuse incident (approximately 27,400 people). This is above the national average of 6.2%, and places Lincolnshire 13th out of 42 police force areas in terms of its domestic abuse prevalence. (Source: Office of National Statistics)

In the last four years, on average there are over 10,000 domestic abuse incidents reported to Lincolnshire Police every year. Of these, 6,500 are standard risk incidents, equivalent to around 3 in 5 domestic abuse incidents reported. A quarter of domestic abuse incidents are graded as medium risk while 8% are high risk. There were 997 victims who were at high risk of serious harm or death referred into the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) by partner agencies in 2019-2020, which represents a 23% increase from the previous year. Since the introduction of the Statutory Domestic Homicide Reviews in April 2011 there have been 17 cases involving 25 deaths that have met the criteria for a domestic homicide review in Lincolnshire.

Over the last four months during COVID-19 DA referrals to MARAC and the DA Outreach service (EDAN Lincs) have remained stable, with some fluctuations week on week; however nothing that has caused concern. General enquires to EDAN lincs by way of telephone calls, emails and the website have increased, however this has not translated into referrals at this stage. Refuges in Lincolnshire have remained at usual capacity with no increase in demand and incidents reported to the police have remained stable with some uplift seen on bank holiday weekends.

Below is a summary of the how the key areas of activity in respect of DA have been operating over the last 4 months:

The DA Core Priority Group has continued to meet through this period of time and decided it would be prudent to meet on a fortnightly basis. All partners have been fully engaged in this process and it has supported the effective management of the DA agenda in Lincolnshire. As well as this partnership updates have been sent to all partner agencies on a weekly basis and for a period of time a separate update was also sent to the Corporate Leadership Team, ensuring everyone was sighted on any key issues, emerging themes and developments etc.

Data – In order to ensure that the DA agenda was being managed effectively through the COVID-19 period a data collection and monitoring process was developed which started on the 13th April and includes weekly data collection and analysis from various agencies, including the Police, EDAN Lincs, MARAC, District Councils, Refuge services. This has allowed the partnership to response to changes in demand and prepare for this if needed.

MARAC - has continued to operate on a weekly basis with all partners engaged in the process. All forums are being held virtually using telephone conferencing facilities. A number of adjustments have been put in place to ensure that cases can be managed effectively and this is working really well.

EDAN (Outreach and IDVA Service) – All outreach and IDVA services have continued to operate effectively and support the needs of victims, children and families. Most of the support to clients is being undertaken through telephone and video consultation which is working really well at this time. Where needed EDAN are redeploying staff within the organisation to focus resources on the elements of the business that are most critical and are managing this really well. Through the commissioning arrangements we are in almost daily contact with EDAN, ensuring that if or when anything changes we can be proactive in our response.

- EDAN are in the process of getting an online chat facility set up to be available within working hours.
- Face to face meetings with clients will begin to happen in July as part of the recovery plans.

Refuges – All refuges in Lincolnshire have continued to operate and support victims and children of Domestic Abuse, they have including relevant questions relating to COVID-19 within their triage process and operating a timetable for communal areas and following social distancing guidance. The National system and referral process has been working as usual with no problems placing people into refuges when needed.

Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR) – In line with Home Office guidance some DHR's were put on hold due to the level of resource they would have required (particularly on health agencies) in relation to research, writing agency reports etc. However since the beginning June all DHR's have been managed as they usually would be, following normal processes.

Communications –

- Social Media - A number of national and local organisations have produced communications packages about DA that agencies have been using over the last 4 months. This is been a coordinated effort to ensure that victims, children and perpetrators continued to be aware of the support services available to them.
- Boots launched a National Campaign led by Hestia where all boots stores are offering a safe space for victims of Domestic Abuse. <https://www.hestia.org/news/press-release-campaign-launches-safe-space-in-boots-stores-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse-across-the-uk>
- Businesses and agencies – The Co-op agreed to display posters and leaflets in all of their stores and pharmacies across Lincolnshire and reinforce the work that the DA Project Officer has been doing with them to raise awareness of DA amongst their workforce and how to manage and support people that require help. Sainsbury's also agreed to display posters, stickers in customer toilets and leaflets throughout all of their stores in Lincolnshire. District Councils did some extra work with their waste management teams to ensure that they were up to date with DA training and knew what to do if they saw anything in relation to DA.
- The DA website has been updated with COVID-19 advice and a new page re DA added to the COVID-19 section on the LCC website.
- Hidden Harms Summit - The government announced that a code word scheme for victims of domestic abuse will be launched. The scheme, championed by the independent Victims and Domestic Abuse commissioners, as well as a number of domestic abuse charities, will mean that victims will be able to signal to staff in participating outlets, such as supermarkets and pharmacies, that they need immediate support. The Home Office is currently working with partners, including charities and the business sector, such as the National Pharmacy Association and British Retail Consortium, on the scheme, with more details to be announced in due course.

Training – all face to face training has been cancelled until 31st July at this stage, however this is likely to be extended until September 2020 and beyond. Therefore a number of developments are taking place to look at alternative ways to deliver this training with a view to this starting in September. In addition there are a number of online e learning packages that people have been using.

The Make a Change community based perpetrator programme - has continued to support clients in Lincolnshire, and is continually reviewing its service provision in line with updates to the Government's social distancing guidance.

As an immediate response to the UK-wide lockdown, Make a Change's in-person group-work programme was suspended and practitioners focused on providing crisis and stress management to clients, delivered via telephone and/or video-conferencing where possible.

Make a Change subsequently provided clients who had previously been on the programme with a series of worksheets supplemented with telephone calls. These focused on maintaining clients' motivation for embarking on a behavioural change programme, formulating risk and safety plans for themselves, and remaining non-abusive and child-centred in their behaviour and attitudes.

Over the past few weeks, Make a Change have been working to adapt materials for online delivery; our priorities remain engaging and intervening with people who use abusive behaviour in the safest and most effective way possible for survivors and their children.

2. Next steps/further developments

The key elements of focus over the next 6 months for the partnership alongside maintaining all services in relation to DA are:

- Recovery planning and preparing for changes in government guidance.
- To proceed with the planned consultation in relation to the DA Bill and governance arrangements in Lincolnshire.

The government reintroduced the domestic abuse bill in parliament on 3rd March 2020; it had its second reading in April and is now in the committee Stage. The Public Bill Committee will scrutinise the Bill line by line and is scheduled to report by Thursday 25 June 2020. A summary of the Bill 2020-2021 is:

To make provision in relation to domestic abuse; to make provision for and in connection with the establishment of a Domestic Abuse Commissioner; to prohibit cross-examination in person in family proceedings in certain circumstances; to make provision about certain violent or sexual offences, and offences involving other abusive behaviour, committed outside the United Kingdom; and for connected purposes.

There are several elements to the Bill explaining in detail the intention of the Bill that can be found in the [DA Bill factsheets](#). The Bill will create, for the first time, a cross-government [statutory definition of domestic abuse](#), to ensure that domestic abuse is properly understood, considered unacceptable and actively challenged across statutory agencies and in public attitudes. In terms of the partnership element, possible changes and impact that might have on practice are included mainly in the [statutory duties on accommodation-based services factsheet](#). However in summary this says:

The Bill will put in place a 4 part statutory framework for the delivery of support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation and provide clarity over governance and accountability:

1. Place a duty on each tier one local authority in England (county and unitary councils (other than London Boroughs), the Greater London Authority and the Isles of Scilly Council) to appoint a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board which it will consult as it performs certain specified functions. These are to:
 - assess the need for accommodation-based domestic abuse support for all victims in their area, including those who require cross-border support
 - develop and publish a strategy for the provision of such support to cover their locality, having regard to the need's assessment
 - give effect to the strategy (through commissioning / de-commissioning decisions)
 - monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy
 - report back to central government
2. Require local authorities to have regard to statutory guidance in exercising their functions.
3. Require the Secretary of State to produce statutory guidance, having consulted the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, local authorities and such other persons as considered appropriate.
4. Require tier two councils (district or borough councils, and London Boroughs) to co-operate with the lead local authority, so far as is reasonably practicable.

In addition to these two key focuses the partnership continues to implement the findings of the MARAC review that took place last year, focusing on delivering a service that meets the needs of high risk victims of DA, children, families and perpetrators in Lincolnshire. Some of the key areas for development include an escalation process to better manage repeat and complex cases, introducing a central repository for all cases/incidents deemed as standard to medium risk in order to identify patterns of abuse that happen over time and a system and process that supports the management of child to parent/carer abuse cases more effectively.

The partnership will support the implementation of the new make a change programme that is being procured at the moment, of which funding from the big lottery has been secured until the end of March 2023, as well as exploring options of how we can develop a sustainable, long term programme for Lincolnshire.

3. Domestic Abuse Commissioned Services

The contract to deliver the specialist DA services in Lincolnshire was awarded by Lincolnshire County Council to a single provider, now called EDAN Lincs (Ending Domestic Abuse Now in Lincolnshire) and the new service commenced on 1st August 2018. One service provider for the county means residents can now access the same support provision from the same provider, wherever they reside in Lincolnshire.

The following are the support services offered by EDAN Lincs across the county:

- Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) Service
- Hospital-based IDVA
- Outreach Domestic Abuse Support Service - Support for Adults (Women and Men)
- Outreach Domestic Abuse Support Service – Support for Children/ Families

The annual review took place in November/December 2019 and EDAN were awarded outstanding in every area of assessment being Contract Compliance, Quality Assurance, Staffing, Continuous Improvement and Engagement.

In the financial year 2019/20 EDAN received 1445 adult referrals. In the last quarter January to March 2020 a total of 408 adult referrals were received into the service. This is the highest quarterly volume seen during the contract to date, with January 2020 representing the highest monthly figure to date. 100% of Q4 2019-20 referrals were triaged and individuals contacted within 48 hours of the referral being received (72 hours at weekends). The service has consistently met this important target throughout 2019-20.

In Quarter 4 of 2019-20 the service engaged with 65 children and young people (CYP). This consisted of 159 one to one therapeutic support sessions with 54 Early Help assessments also completed.

Data and performance development will allow differentiation between direct and indirect support provision to CYP as well as enhanced pathway and timescale monitoring. It is known 575 CYP were associated/connected to an engaged adult referral within the outreach service during Q4 2019-20, the enhanced reporting will clearly determine the number of these who went on to receive direct support from the targeted CYP outreach service.

In addition to the Outreach Service EDAN Lincs have been successful in procuring the refuge contract for the County and are in the mobilisation stage.

4. Domestic Abuse related funding opportunities

Lincolnshire County Council were successful in receiving funding from a bid to MHCLG for £187,000. This is to support the development of consistent Countywide sanctuary scheme to help people suffering from DA to stay in their own homes where appropriate. In addition EDAN and SoLDAS have been successful in receiving funding from MHCLG in relation to COVID-19 to support accommodation based services for DA victims and LCC on behalf of EDAN has been successful at securing £64,000 from the MOJ for DA support until the end of October.

5. Summary

It is hoped that the information in this report demonstrates to the Committee the amount of work being undertaken in relation to DA, and the pivotal role that Lincolnshire County Council has in delivering this work. These key areas of work, as well as the commissioned DA services, complement each other and create a holistic response to victims, perpetrators and children affected by Domestic Abuse.

6. Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

Not Applicable

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

Not Applicable

8. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

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