



Open Report on behalf of Andrew Crookham, Executive Director - Resources

Report to:	Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date:	27 July 2021
Subject:	Update on the 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 the introduction of the new DA Act 2021 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 Council's role in driving forward the domestic abuse agenda in Lincolnshire.

1. Background:

Key areas of activity

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 5.5% of adults aged 16-74 will have experienced domestic abuse in the last year ending March 2020. This national figure would equate to roughly 30,200 adults aged 16-74 suffering domestic abuse in Lincolnshire (assuming a similar prevalence in Lincolnshire compared to the England and Wales average).

The true number of victims of domestic abuse is also likely to be higher when children are included. CSEW figures suggest that 41% of partner abuse victims suffered abuse while their children were in the house, and that 21% of victims disclosed that the children did see or hear what happened. (Source: Office of National Statistics) If only one child was present at each of the 21% of domestic abuse victimisations in Lincolnshire each year, this

would mean that 5,500 children witnessed domestic abuse in their home each year. This means that the true number of Lincolnshire residents affected by domestic abuse each year is likely to be upwards of 35,700 adult victims and child witnesses.

In the last five years, on average there are over 10,000 domestic abuse incidents reported to Lincolnshire Police every year. Of these, circa 6,000 are standard risk incidents, equivalent to around 3 in 5 domestic abuse incidents reported. The proportion of reported incidents that are graded as high risk has been falling, while the proportion graded as medium risk has increased. Improvements in recording practice will have contributed to this. There were 930 victims who were at high risk of serious harm or death referred into the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) by partner agencies in 2020-2021. Since the introduction of the Statutory Domestic Homicide Reviews in April 2011 there have been 18 cases involving 27 deaths that have met the criteria for a domestic homicide review in Lincolnshire.

Given the prevalence of DA and the very serious effects it can have on individuals and families, the council considers this as a priority area of business; committing resource and leading the DA agenda with partners

Below is a summary of the key areas of activity in respect of DA over the last 12 months, however the key focus in relation to DA over the last year to 6 months has been preparing for the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

The DA Act 2021

The DA Bill received royal assent on 29th April and became a statutory duty for tier one local authorities from the 1st April 2021. There are a number of changes the new Act will deliver:

- A legal definition of domestic abuse which recognises children as victims in their own right;
- A Domestic Abuse Commissioner to stand up for survivors and life-saving domestic abuse services;
- A legal duty on councils to fund support for survivors in 'safe accommodation'
- New protections in the family and civil courts for survivors – including a ban on abusers from cross-examining their victims, and a guarantee that survivors can access special measures (including separate waiting rooms, entrances and exits and screens);
- New criminal offences – including post-separation coercive control, non-fatal strangulation, threats to disclose private sexual images;
- A ban on abusers using a defence of 'rough sex';
- A guarantee that all survivors will be in priority need for housing, and will keep a secure tenancy in social housing if they need to escape an abuser;
- A ban on GPs for charging for medical evidence of domestic abuse, including for legal aid;

- A duty on the government to issue a code of practice on how data is shared between the public services survivors report to (such as the police) and immigration enforcement.

All of these elements of the Act have a positive impact on the DA agenda and will have an impact of how services across partners are delivered, however the area that affects LCC significantly is under part four of the Act.

Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a four-part statutory framework for the delivery of support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation and provides clarity over governance and accountability.

1. Section 54 specifically places a duty on each tier one local authority in England to appoint a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board which it will consult as it performs certain specified functions under section 53. 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. (This will be produced by MHCLG)
4. Require tier two councils to co-operate with the lead local authority, so far as is reasonably practicable.

The makeup of Local Partnership Boards may vary across local authority areas, but they are expected to include a broad range of representative partners. As a minimum, the Boards will include persons representing local authorities, victims and their children, domestic abuse charities or voluntary organisations, health care providers and the police or other criminal justice agencies.

The types of accommodation that is covered by the new duty are broad in recognition of the diversity of housing in which victims and their children may live. The new duty covers the provision of support to victims and their children residing in:

- refuge accommodation
- specialist safe accommodation
- dispersed accommodation
- sanctuary schemes
- move-on or second stage accommodation

There is also be the requirement to offer domestic abuse support through the new duty, this includes:

- advocacy support – development of personal safety plans, liaison with other services (for example, GPs and social workers, welfare benefit providers)
- domestic abuse-prevention advice – support to assist victims to recognise the signs of abusive relationships, to help them remain safe (including online) and to prevent re-victimisation
- specialist support for victims with protected characteristics and / or complex needs, for example, interpreters, faith services, mental health advice and support, drug and alcohol advice and support, and immigration advice
- children’s support – including play therapy and child advocacy
- housing-related support – providing housing-related advice and support, for example, securing a permanent home and advice on how to live safely and independently
- counselling and therapy for both adults and children

Lincolnshire's response to the DA Act

In response and preparation for the new statutory duties under the DA Act 2021 the following actions have been taken in Lincolnshire up until April 2021:

- Full partnership consultation to look at DA governance, resources and services
- An implementation plan was developed and delivered
- Review of commissioned services
- Partnership conference held in March 2021 with 70/80 people in attendance
- Training development programme introduced
- District Council and Housing provider forum developed

The outcome of the partnership consultation was to change the governance of the DA agenda, ensuring that it met the requirements of the DA Act and that it was better able to deal with the complex nature and breadth of DA. Therefore since December 2020 the partnership has been transitioning the DA governance from the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership to a separate DA partnership that sits alongside the SLP and is on equal footing with the Adults Safeguarding Board and Children's Safeguarding partnership. The partnership is now fully up and running and has good representation at both an operational and strategic level from a variety of agencies.

As well at the partnership restructure there has been a review of the LCC DA team which will result in its expansion to ensure the new statutory duties under the DA Act 2021 can be met. It is worth noting that the government, through the MHCLG, allocated funding to all tier one and tier two local authorities for 2021/22 to support the implementation of the new duties and therefore the increased capacity within the DA will be drawn from that funding. Funding will be allocated separately for the next 2 year until March 2024 and subsequently it will be part of the spending review process.

Through the DA Act funding allocation LCC was allotted £1.4 million for 2020/21 to support the execution of the new statutory duties. Each District Council was also allocated a separate amount under their duty to cooperate with the new statutory duties. This funding will be allocated accordingly once the needs assessment is completed and the strategy has been developed and agreed.

The partnership is currently undertaking a full needs assessment of DA looking at all aspects of DA agenda as well as including the new statutory duties around accommodation based services for victims of DA. This piece of work will be complete by the end of July and will help inform the development of the DA strategy for Lincolnshire. Under the DA Act 2021 LCC has a statutory duty to publish a strategy by 31st October 2021 and every 3 years thereafter.

Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) – A number of changes have been made to MARAC over the last 12 months in order to improve and update its operating model and to some extent in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. MARAC has moved to 1 full day weekly meeting to two half days on a weekly basis, this is to ensure that all victims and children are getting the highest quality response and outcomes from the process and to support staff wellbeing. In addition, the partnership has piloted a 'MARAC Plus' to better manage repeat and complex cases, of which a full review is being undertaken as part of the needs assessment and will be presented to the strategic group of the DA partnership.

Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR) – DHR's have continued to be effectively managed within the last 12 months and through the COVID-19 pandemic only one DHR was delayed due to capacity within the health agencies. Since April 2020 and to date the partnership has commissioned 3 DHR's. Two DHR's have been published in the last 12 months.

Communications and engagement activity -

- Social Media - A number of national and local organisations have produced communications packages about DA that agencies have been using over the last 12 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.
- 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.
- Hidden Harms Summit - The government launched a code word scheme 'Ask Ani' which is in partnership with pharmacies across the Country. In Lincolnshire there were 27 active pharmacies signed up to the scheme, however advice about the scheme has been sent out to all pharmacies. The scheme means that victims signal

to staff in participating outlets, such as supermarkets and pharmacies, that they need immediate support.

- A communications and engagement strategy is being developed across the 4 partnership boards, the SLP, DA partnership, safeguarding children's and safeguarding adults. This will ensure a collaborative approach to communications, avoid duplication and make this area of work more sustainable.

Multi Agency DA Training – Due to the COVID-19 pandemic all face to face training had to be suspended since March 2020. However over the last 12 months the team and partnership have been working on alternative training methods and have converted a number of face to face training into e learning models, workshops and resources for people to download. There is a full training development programme in place and all DA training is being embedded with the safeguarding 6 year pathway training programme.

Make a Change community based perpetrator programme - has continued to support clients in Lincolnshire throughout the last 12 months, 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 months, Make a Change have been starting to work face to face with clients again and continue to look at improvements to the delivery of the programme both online and in person. The 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:

- To complete the DA Needs assessment
- Develop the new DA Strategy and delivery plan, ensuring it addresses the needs identified in the needs assessment
- Continue to embed the new DA partnership arrangements
- Develop a monitoring and performance framework in line with the new statutory duties and in support of the DA strategy.
- Develop a mechanism by which survivors of DA have a direct input into the DA

partnership and service design.

In addition to these key focuses the partnership continues to implement the findings of the MARAC review, focusing on delivering a service that meets the needs of high risk victims of DA, children, families and perpetrators in Lincolnshire. One of the key areas for development will be to 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.

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 Service
- Outreach Domestic Abuse Support Service - Support for Adults (Women and Men)
- Outreach Domestic Abuse Support Service – Support for Children/ Families

In the last 12 months and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic all outreach and IDVA services have continued to operate effectively and support the needs of victims, children and families. However the Hospital IDVA Service was suspended, given Government restrictions, which has impacted on the usual service that could be offered through this initiative, although hospital personnel were given direct access to the IDVA service throughout this period for advice and support. Most of the support to clients has been undertaken through telephone and video consultation which has worked really well, although where possible service users have been having face to face support. As a result a number of developments have taken place looking at access to service, the service provided and how these can be improved to be more efficient and increase capacity within the service.

There were just fewer than 2,000 referrals for adult victims of domestic abuse to specialist outreach support services in Lincolnshire (provided by EDAN Lincs) during 2020/21. In the 9 months July 2020 to March 2021, 6,930 people contacted EDAN Lincs for support and advice regarding domestic abuse.

In the latest quarter January to March 2021 a total of 652 adult referrals were received into the service. This is the highest quarterly volume seen during the contract to date, with March 2021 representing the highest monthly figure to date. 100% of Q4 2020-2021 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.

1,053 children and young people (CYP) and dependent adults were indirectly supported within the outreach service during 2020-21. In Q3 of 2020-21, 122 CYP were referred for direct support. This consisted of 74 referrals for one to one therapeutic support sessions.

In addition to the Outreach Service EDAN Lincs have been successful in procuring the refuge contract for the County in August 2020. Refuges in Lincolnshire over the last 12 months have remained at usual capacity with no increase in demand.

Domestic Abuse related funding opportunities

From April 2020 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. In addition a new fund was released through the MOJ for IDVA services and LCC on behalf of the IDVA service have been successful at securing funding until April 2023 of £236,391 for a Court IDVA, Rural IDVA, Further IDVA and CHIDVA (Children's IDVA) as well as a further £46,508 to the outreach provision.

4. Conclusion

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. There has been significant change over the last 12 months with COVID-19 and the introduction of the new DA Act 2021, however the developments made with the DA partnership, increased capacity and resources as well as the commitment from all agencies in Lincolnshire has meant that Lincolnshire's response to the DA agenda has gone from strength to strength.

5. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

6. 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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