

Swindon Internal Audit Services



Swindon Internal Audit Services: Domestic Abuse Strategy

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Report Distribution – Final Report issued on 22nd December 2016 to:

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Swindon Internal Audit Services: Domestic Abuse Strategy

Executive Summary

Background

The Swindon and Wiltshire Strategy to Reduce Domestic Abuse (2015-17) makes clear that domestic abuse is a complex and challenging issue; it is a largely hidden and under-reported crime, as well as a social and public health issue, cutting across all geographic and cultural groups and having a long lasting and devastating impact on those living with its effects.

Reducing domestic abuse is a key priority of the Swindon and Wiltshire Community Safety Partnerships (made up of statutory partners in Swindon and Wiltshire, including Police, Fire and Rescue Service, Local Authorities, NHS and Probation Services), who have responsibilities for reducing crime and disorder across the County. A Local Authority also has statutory responsibilities for reducing crime and safeguarding adults and children at risk of harm and therefore must play a central role in facilitating local partnerships, providing services and raising awareness of domestic abuse across the Borough.

Reducing domestic abuse contributes to two of the Council's Corporate Priorities: ensure clean and safe streets and improve our public spaces; and, help people to help themselves while always protecting our most vulnerable children and adults.

The priority of this audit was to review the Swindon and Wiltshire Strategy to Reduce Domestic Abuse (and its supporting framework), to provide assurance to the Head of Housing and Community Safety regarding its robustness and effectiveness in reducing the prevalence of domestic abuse in Swindon.

Audit Opinion

The opinion on the current controls in place is that **significant improvements are required**. Existing procedures need to be improved to ensure that they are fully reliable and a number of significant recommendations have been made to improve missing or failing controls. The combination of the high impact of the system, along with the opinion on the system controls, gives an overall risk assessment to the Council as being **of concern**.

The opinion above reflects the findings in relation to the approach of all partners involved in tackling Domestic Abuse, and does not necessarily reflect the Council's sole responsibility for actions. Where improvements are necessary, these require an agency-wide commitment.

Key Messages

The Strategy to Reduce Domestic Abuse is in place and covers key areas regarding domestic abuse. Key stakeholders of Swindon's Community Safety Partnership (CSP) from within the Council were spoken with during the audit (see **Appendix B**) and they were satisfied that there is cross agency commitment to tackling domestic abuse in Swindon.

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However, the available resources in which to deliver on the Strategy across the partnership are limited and there is a requirement to better define the priorities for tackling domestic abuse to ensure the Strategy is achievable. There is also a need to better define the intended outcomes of domestic abuse work and establish a performance framework that is capable of measuring the effectiveness of the Strategy, to inform continuing priorities going forward.

Key recommendations are as follows:

- A more pragmatic approach to action planning is needed, with the Strategy clear as to what the key areas of focus are for tackling domestic abuse. In particular the action plan should be reviewed in the context of providing clarity around objectives of actions, resources required, outcomes expected, priorities for actions, realistic timescales, appropriate Lead Officers across the Council and partner agencies and a clear review of actions at the appropriate Domestic Abuse sub-group.
- A performance framework for measuring the success of the Strategy should be established, which defines the strategic outcomes, performance targets and indicators of success to be measured going forward (see an example from Essex at **Appendix D**).
- The Swindon Community Safety Partnership, or appropriate Domestic Abuse sub-group, should identify the data needs regarding domestic abuse, to better monitor performance. This data should be used to continually inform the basis of the Strategy and priorities in the action plan (see **Appendix E** for potential sources of information).
- Clearer ownership and commitment from partner agencies is necessary to ensure responsibilities for resources and actions are clearly defined, to reduce over reliance on the Domestic Violence Co-ordinator and ensure an ongoing and sustainable commitment to reducing domestic abuse.
- The Community Safety Partnership or 'Domestic Abuse and Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategic Board' should define their expectations of the quality assurance function of the Domestic Abuse and VAWG Management and Quality Assurance Group. Clear objectives and, where necessary, methodology for undertaking quality assurance should also be discussed and decided upon.
- The Operating Protocol for Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences should be reviewed and updated to ensure agencies are aware of the process and to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of meetings. ('Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences' are a multi-agency meeting for reviewing and responding to high risk domestic abuse cases).

Savings/increased revenue opportunities

- There are no direct savings identified as a result of this review. However, it is considered that the implementation of recommendations in the report could improve the effectiveness of the Strategy, which should indirectly make better use of the resources expended on the Strategy. There are no revenue opportunities that have been identified as part of this review.

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Context

The cross-government definition of domestic abuse is “any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional.”

The Swindon and Wiltshire Community Safety Partnerships have responsibility for reducing crime and disorder across the County, including domestic abuse. To this end, the ‘Swindon and Wiltshire Strategy to Reduce Domestic Abuse,’ (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Strategy’) has been established, with the most recent version (2015-17) being adopted by the Council in December 2015.

The Strategy provides the context for tackling domestic abuse, highlighting its complex and challenging nature: it is a crime, as well as a social and public health issue, cutting across all geographic and cultural groups and causing long lasting and devastating impact on victims and their families. However, it is estimated that only one in five incidents of domestic abuse is reported and a victim may experience around thirty-five incidents of abuse before talking to anyone, with many more people presenting at hospitals or GP surgeries as a result of injuries caused by a current or former partner.¹

The Strategy aims to tackle domestic abuse across five identified priority areas: victims and survivors; children and young people; perpetrators of domestic abuse; training and awareness raising; and continuous improvement across agencies involved.

Delivery is the responsibility of individual agencies (these agencies include police, fire and rescue service, Local Authorities, NHS and probation services, with many others contributing - see **Appendix G**), but the Local Authority plays a central role in facilitating local partnerships, as well as directly providing services (e.g. primarily through adult and children services), raising awareness and meeting additional statutory responsibilities for reducing crime and safeguarding adults and children at risk of harm.

Reducing domestic abuse also contributes to two of the Council’s Corporate Priorities: “Ensure clean and safe streets and improve our public spaces and local culture²” and “Help people to help themselves while always protecting our most vulnerable children and adults.”

¹ The most recent Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (An Overview of Health and Wellbeing in Swindon 2015/16’) that informs the Strategy provides further context relating to occurrences of domestic abuse in Swindon, as follows:

- Swindon has estimated high levels of domestic abuse, compared with its ‘nearest neighbours’. Reporting of domestic abuse is increasing, however, given its hidden nature the levels could be much higher than currently reported;
- The hidden harm of abuse within the home significantly impacts the health and well-being of children witnessing violent acts; on the mental health of victims; risk of suicide; and substance misuse issues, including smoking.
- Between October 2014 and September 2015, domestic abuse accounted for 38% of all “Violence against the Person” crimes.

² Under this Priority is the specific Pledge to “Reduce the level of recorded violent crime to 13.97 offences per 1,000 of the population by March 2019.”

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Risk Areas Examined and Findings

In accordance with best practice, a risk-based approach was adopted that identified the key risks to business objectives. These were discussed and agreed with the Head of Housing and Community Safety, the Community Safety Team Leader and Domestic Violence Co-ordinator before the commencement of the audit.

This audit has been undertaken to provide assurance to the Head of Housing and Community Safety that the Strategy is robust and effective in reducing the prevalence of domestic abuse. The agreed scope was to review the Strategy and supporting framework, to establish where there may be gaps in provision. Where time allowed, further work would be undertaken to establish whether resources are sufficient to achieve reductions in domestic violence. This has therefore been a high level review and the Council's (and partners') detailed approach to responding to individual domestic abuse cases has not been undertaken.

The Auditor undertook this task through examination of relevant documents and conversations with key Council stakeholders of the Strategy (see **Appendix B**). The table below summarises the risk areas examined, providing an assessment of the adequacy of controls in place in each area:

Risk Area Examined and Findings	Audit Conclusion
<p>Risk area: Strategy and Action Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Swindon and Wiltshire Strategy to Reduce Domestic Abuse 2015/17 was agreed at Cabinet on 9th December 2015 and adopted at the Health and Wellbeing Board on 9th March 2016. The Strategy is jointly for Swindon and Wiltshire, with both Local Authorities involved in setting the Strategy. However, the delivery of the Strategy in each area is managed by separate Community Safety Partnerships in Swindon and Wiltshire. (NB. The Community Safety Partnership referred to in the findings below relates specifically to the Swindon Partnership). The Strategy was reviewed during the audit, alongside various other Local Authorities' Strategies to inform findings. In general, the Swindon Strategy provides a high level overview of priorities for tackling domestic abuse and covers the same key areas and themes as other strategies. It is clear that most LAs are working with similar issues and challenges. The Strategy states that action plans will be clear as to objectives, actions, outputs and outcomes and will show the lead agencies and resource required. Swindon has an Action Plan in place, but it does not conform to these expectations. Although extensive actions are recorded, these are vague within the Action Plan and there is not a clear priority for these actions, especially in the context of the available resources in which to deliver them (AP1.1). Although no major gaps in terms of coverage were identified, some areas could benefit from being more explicit in the Strategy (AP1.5). For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Despite being identified as challenging to engage, the Strategy has only a single reference to 'working with educational establishments.' (<i>continued overleaf</i>) 	<p>Significant improvements required</p>

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Risk Area Examined and Findings	Audit Conclusion
<p>Risk area: Strategy and Action Planning (continued)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Monitoring actions to reduce violence against women and girls (VAWG) is to be part of the Domestic Abuse sub-groups' responsibility in future, but the current Strategy, Action Plan and Terms of References of these groups are not clear as to the commitment to this agenda. ○ There is a potential lack of focus relating to the targeting of minority groups (e.g. black, minority ethnic (BME), lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT), men etc.) and how complex issues within these groups will be addressed. ● Some further areas for improvement were also identified regarding the layout or contents of the Strategy (AP1.6): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Although there is a link to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) at the end of the Strategy document, the Strategy is not clear as to the data that underpins it. Other local authorities' strategies provide a clearer picture of the national and local context for domestic abuse and the basis of their specific focus (i.e. either through their own data analysis or wider sources, such as Police inspection reports, external assessments and user feedback). Without this context for domestic abuse in Swindon and Wiltshire, the Strategy might appear generic. ○ Similarly, the introduction section of the Strategy is not attributed to a named lead officer(s) in key agencies; this may imply a lack of specific officer / partner commitment to reducing domestic abuse. ○ The risks to the achievement of objectives are not acknowledged in the Strategy; there is not a risk register for domestic abuse at a Community Safety Partnership or Council level (individual agencies outside of the Council were not reviewed and therefore may have their own). ○ The Strategy does not refer to activities or progress since the last strategy. The Strategy for the previous period (2013-14) is almost exactly the same, which may suggest that no discernible sense of progress has been made in the interim. 	<p style="text-align: center;">See previous page</p>
<p>Risk area: Data and Performance Measurement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There are no defined outcomes and performance measures in the Strategy, outside of general objectives to reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse and increase reporting and awareness. There is no framework for measuring the success of the strategy and individual elements. It is therefore difficult to establish that the Strategy is effective, or that the Council and other agencies are contributing to improvements. Equally, a lack of clearly defined outcomes impacts on the ability to undertake effective outcome based commissioning of services (AP1.2). This was also a common finding across other local authorities' strategies reviewed during the audit. ● Some performance data is collected (mostly from Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences - see below, and the Police) and analysed by the Performance Team, who provide quarterly reports to the Community Safety Partnership and the Strategic Board. This data provides mainly geographical information regarding where domestic abuse occurs, and spikes in incidents e.g. around Christmas. (<i>cont.</i>) 	<p style="text-align: center;">Significant improvements required</p>

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Risk Area Examined and Findings	Audit Conclusion
<p>Risk area: Data and Performance Measurement (continued)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are some targeted responses (e.g. awareness campaigns that link with these spikes in data), but it is not clear how far the information drives the Strategy (e.g. to target identified hotspots). • Data and intelligence was cited as a weakness by many spoken with during the audit, in particular: not being clear of what data is needed; not identifying the potential sources of information; not using data in an intelligent way; and, the reluctance of some providers or partners to provide data (AP1.3). 	<p style="text-align: center;">See previous page</p>
<p>Risk area: Governance Structures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Community Safety Partnership has a formally defined governance structure to oversee its monitoring role for domestic abuse. This structure was recently amended in 2016 in order to allow for improved oversight, when the old 'Steering Group' was split into a Strategic Board and a Management and Quality Assurance Group. The Board reports into the Community Safety Partnership and a further Domestic Abuse Forum (set up to enable information sharing and networking between practitioners) reports into the Group. • There are also a number of other regularly sitting sub-groups, such as the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference, with others sitting as needed, i.e. the Domestic Homicide Review Group. • The structure ensures the relationship of domestic abuse with other key boards (e.g. the Health and Wellbeing Board, Local Safeguarding Adults Board, Local Safeguarding Children Board). • Terms of References for each Group are in place. Some officers were concerned that there is some duplication of coverage between these groups (and a review of the Terms does indicate some overlap which requires clarification between members), but most were generally happy with the split between the strategic and delivery roles of the groups (AP1.7). • Officers were positive regarding the membership of these groups and participation and attendance from partners was seen as positive. However, one gap is the lack of representation from schools, or someone in the Council with responsibilities in this area (e.g. Head of Education, the Healthy Schools co-ordinator - AP1.7). • The recently created Domestic Abuse and VAWG Management and Quality Assurance Group requires further discussion regarding how the Group will fulfil its quality assurance role (AP1.8). • As the structure has only recently been established, officers spoken with during the audit stated it was too early to say if this will be sufficient in reducing domestic abuse across the Borough. However, most were optimistic that the new structure provides an improved basis on which to set and monitor the Domestic Abuse Strategy. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Satisfactory</p>

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Risk Area Examined and Findings	Audit Conclusion
<p>Risk area: Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was no information readily available to the Auditor in which to compare domestic abuse funding locally or nationally. The Council's responsibilities are for coordinating the Borough's approach to domestic abuse. The Council's Community Safety Partnership Team is small and there are limited resources within the Council for direct delivery. Generally, it is up to members attending meetings to decide which agency will be responsible for undertaking action. Although (as above) most officers were happy that the membership and participation of agencies was strong, there does appear to be a gap regarding resource commitments. For example, for approximately 80% of actions in the Action Plan, the Council's Domestic Abuse Reduction Co-ordinator is named as the Lead Officer, despite the intention of this role to be one of coordination, rather than delivery. Where there is a physical cost, in addition to an officer's time, it is understood that the Council will generally have to meet it (although some funding has been provided by the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office). This was provided as the reason for some of the actions not yet being completed or progressed. The Strategy therefore needs to be clearer as to the resource requirements for delivering actions in the Strategy and there is need for a clear partner commitment to sourcing actions (AP1.4). Resource generation is included in the Action Plan, with the identification of funding required to implement several business cases. However, whilst it is reasonable to explore such options, it is not seen as a sustainable model to rely so heavily on external funding. The risk associated with this lack of income is not clear in the strategy (AP1.4). 	<p>Significant improvements required</p>

Secure Procedures and Good Practice in Swindon

In addition to some of the findings above, the following outlines where the Council and partners can demonstrate further good practice. This list is not exhaustive:

- There is a clear, top-down commitment for tackling Domestic Abuse in Swindon. The Councillor chairing the Community Safety Partnership described being given a "crystal clear commitment" to the Domestic Abuse agenda from the Leader of the Council and domestic violence is one of the Council's key transformation programmes agreed at Corporate Management Team in November 2016.
- The Community Safety Partnership Team recently commissioned the Council's Insight Team to undertake research into the current approaches to reducing domestic abuse. A report was produced based on assessment of evidence around best practice, across a range of themes, both nationally and internationally. The work was detailed and there is evidence of this being discussed at Community Safety Partnership sub-groups to inform future strategic approaches in Swindon. (*cont.*)

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- Swindon has a Family Contact Point that generally acts as the first point of contact for those requiring support or access to services within Swindon. Family Contact Point receives information from the Police regarding domestic abuse incidents (via 'PPD1 forms') which are triaged and forwarded to relevant departments to respond.
- PPD1s are used to risk assess domestic abuse cases, with clear escalation defined for when cases should be referred to Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences. Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences were, according to the majority of people spoken with during the audit, a well-attended and well managed risk panel, chaired by the Police.
- The Council commissions a Support Service to provide support and a refuge service to victims of domestic abuse. This service is currently provided by Women's Aid, but is out to tender (for provision from April 2017) and is to be funded by the Council, with a contribution from the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- Women's Aid also currently provides an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) service. One IDVA is based at the Great Western Hospital, with a further two rotating around GPs in the Borough providing support to survivors of domestic abuse. Funding for future investment in these posts has been secured between the Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner and have been included as part of the invitation to tender for the support service. Anecdotally, this service was seen as having a positive impact on victims' lives.
- The Council commissions a 'Perpetrator Programme' through the Bristol, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire Community Rehabilitation Company.
- The Council employs a Domestic Violence Housing Options Officer to support victims with their accommodation needs.
- A documented Information Sharing Protocol between key agencies is in place to underpin the sharing of domestic abuse intelligence between agencies in Swindon and Wiltshire.
- Training and awareness of domestic abuse is offered through the Local Safeguarding Children Board site.
- The Swindon Community Safety Partnership has the responsibility for establishing domestic homicide reviews within Wiltshire, which are set up where a death of a person aged 16 or over appears to have resulted from domestic abuse. The Council has so far completed one domestic homicide review in the event of a domestic death (with three more at various stages of review). An action plan was set up as a result of the completed review (published on the Community Safety Partnership website in June 2015) and all but one action has been implemented (the remaining action relates to the updating of the Church of England's Domestic Abuse Policy).

Overall Opinion

Materiality and Impact: High: Each year around 2.1 million people suffer some form of domestic abuse in the UK, with more than 100,000 people at high and imminent risk of being murdered or seriously injured as a result of domestic abuse. There are 130,000 children who live in homes where there is high-risk domestic abuse and 62% of children living with domestic abuse are directly harmed by the perpetrator of the abuse, in addition to the harm caused by witnessing the abuse of others.³

³ Figures taken from 'SafeLives', a charity devoted to ending domestic abuse, which provides a summary of statistics relating to domestic abuse on their website.

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In addition to the risk of death or injury, domestic abuse has other wide ranging consequences that may impact on key council services, for example in public health, housing and social care. An effective multi-agency strategy is therefore essential in preventing and supporting victims of domestic violence.

Opinion on system controls: Significant improvements required (see Appendix A) i.e. the Auditor completing the review concluded that existing procedures needed to be improved to ensure that they are fully reliable. A number of significant recommendations have been made to improve missing or failing controls.

As recorded above, the Auditor acknowledges there are numerous examples of good practice operating in Swindon that contribute to the battle against domestic abuse within Swindon and Wiltshire. However, the opinion is based on the area reviewed in the audit i.e. the Strategy and its supporting framework.

Overall Assessment of Risk: The combination of the high impact of the system, along with the opinion on the system controls gives an overall risk assessment to the Council as being **of concern**:

		MATERIALITY AND IMPACT		
SYSTEM CONTROL		High	Medium	Low
1	High standard	Moderate	Minimal	Minimal
2	Satisfactory	Moderate	Moderate	Minimal
3	Significant improvements required	Of concern	Moderate	Moderate
4	Fundamental weaknesses identified	Significant	Of concern	Moderate

Further sources of assurance: Ofsted, together with the Care Quality Commission, HMI (Her Majesty's Inspectors) Constabulary and HMI Probation are currently undertaking joint targeted area inspections of the multi-agency response to abuse and neglect in a sample of local authorities. The inspections include "a 'deep dive' that focuses on the response to children living with domestic abuse."

At the time of writing, only the inspection report for Salford has been published (after an inspection completed there in September 2016). However, Wiltshire Council also received an inspection in November that is due to be published in the near future.

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Although Wiltshire Council has processes for dealing with domestic abuse which are independent of Swindon Council, both authorities share a Strategy and the multi-agency approach involves many of the same partners. Therefore, when this report is published, there will be a further source of assurance regarding the approach to tackling domestic abuse in Swindon. Where necessary, reference to findings of Wiltshire's inspection will be included in this report, where available prior to finalising.

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Action Plan

The action plan provides a summary of matters arising during the audit, together with the recommendations to mitigate risks, the manager's response to the recommendations, the officer responsible and timescale for implementation. Recommendations are prioritised to reflect the most significant matters arising. Responsible officer in many cases has been named as the Community Safety Team Leader, but this is mainly in regards to coordinating actions; other officers (and partner agencies) will be equally responsible for implementation.

Ref.	Finding	Recommendation	Responsible Officer and Timescale	Management Response
1	<i>Risk Area: Domestic Abuse Strategy</i>			
1.1	<p>Action Planning and Prioritisation</p> <p>The Strategy states that action plans will be clear as to objectives, actions, outputs and outcomes and will show the lead agencies and resource required.</p> <p>Swindon has an Action Plan in place (which is to be reviewed in upcoming Community Safety Partnership meetings), but it does not conform to the expectations laid out in the Strategy.</p> <p>Although extensive actions are recorded, these are vague and there is not a clear priority for these actions, especially in the context of the available resources in which to deliver them. This has led to many actions not being implemented, with progress in some areas limited (particularly around individual strategies for training and awareness and communication).</p> <p>Whilst this is not necessarily a criticism of the commitment or performance of agencies in tackling domestic abuse, it does highlight a lack of clarity or focus regarding priorities, which are critical when the remit of the Community Safety Partnership is already wide, as are the specific agendas for domestic abuse and VAWG.</p> <p>The Chair of the Community Safety Partnership Board (Councillor Donachie) stated that a more condensed, one page strategy could be useful to demonstrate these strategic priorities at a high level.</p> <p>See Appendix C for full findings in relation to AP1.1.</p>	<p>A more pragmatic approach to action planning is needed, with the Strategy clear as to what the key areas of focus are for domestic abuse activities. In particular the Action Plan should be reviewed in the context of providing clarity around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail of actions and related objectives • Outcomes expected • Clear priorities for actions and realistic timescales. An ongoing assessment of implementation should flag when actions will not be completed, with mitigation or reprioritising undertaken as necessary • Outputs and resources required and from where these will be provided • Appropriate Lead Officers across the Council and partner agencies • Removal of duplicated actions • Clear review of actions at the appropriate Domestic Abuse sub-group. <p>Consideration should be given for producing a 'one-pager' on Domestic Abuse, to better focus Domestic Abuse priorities and communicate them to key stakeholders.</p> <p>Priority: High</p>	<p>Community Safety Team Leader</p> <p>April 2017</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>The big task of the new DA Board is to focus the priorities going forward and at the next meeting (in January 2017) there will be a major refresh and reshaping of this action plan.</p> <p>The current Strategy relates to 2015-17 and so is also due to be reviewed next year.</p> <p>Producing an infographic will be looked at to illustrate the high level Strategy and key priorities and help to embed the Strategy, especially at CSP Board level.</p>

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Ref.	Finding	Recommendation	Responsible Officer and Timescale	Management Response
1	<i>Risk Area: Domestic Abuse Strategy</i>			
1.2	<p>Outcomes and Performance Measurement</p> <p>There are no defined outcomes or performance measures in the Strategy, outside of general objectives to reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse and increase reporting and awareness. Measuring the success of the strategy or individual elements within is therefore not possible.</p> <p>Outside of the Strategy, the auditor was informed that one key target was to reduce repeat incidents, which are measured through Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences). However, this measure is similarly absent in the strategy.</p> <p>The Councillor and Officers spoken with during the audit accepted that, although the outcomes in the Strategy are broadly defined, a performance framework is not in place. It is accepted by the auditor that there are difficulties in determining multi-agency targets for domestic abuse, as there may be differing priorities of individual agencies and a delicate balance between potentially conflicting measures (e.g. between reducing domestic abuse incidences against the want to increase reporting). It should be noted that this was also a common finding of most other local authorities' strategies reviewed during the audit.</p> <p>However, without this, it is difficult to establish the effectiveness of the Strategy or the contribution of the Council and other agencies. Equally, a lack of clearly defined outcomes impacts on the ability to undertake effective, outcome-based commissioning of services.</p> <p>For further context of this finding and an example of performance measures from Essex, Thurrock and Southend, see Appendix D.</p>	<p>A performance framework for measuring the success of the Strategy should be established between partners, through discussions at the Community Safety Partnership and the Domestic Abuse and VAWG Strategic Board.</p> <p>The framework should define the strategic outcomes, performance targets and indicators of success, to be measured going forward for each theme in the Strategy.</p> <p>Any measures should be jointly agreed between partners and compliment the need to increase domestic abuse reporting.</p> <p>Targets should aim to measure the reactive and proactive / preventative aspects of the Strategy and include a combination of quantitative and qualitative formats where necessary.</p> <p>Where good practice is available, benchmarking should take place with other local authorities, to inform Swindon's approach in this area.</p> <p>Priority: High</p>	<p>Community Safety Team Leader</p> <p>April 2017</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>This will be a vital part of defining the action plan, as per AP1.1.</p> <p>There is a need to define what is needed and this will also be discussed at the new DA Board in January 2017 and a menu of DA data produced that links to the action plan.</p> <p>This can then be used to inform a calendar of targeted responses and to measure the effectiveness of these responses (which is the intention of the proposed Communication Strategy in the current Action Plan).</p>

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Ref.	Finding	Recommendation	Responsible Officer and Timescale	Management Response
1	<i>Risk Area: Domestic Abuse Strategy</i>			
1.3	<p>Data</p> <p>Data and intelligence was cited as a weakness by many spoken with during the audit, in particular: not being clear of what data is needed; not identifying the potential sources of information (see Appendix E); not using data in an intelligent way, e.g. defining outcomes or driving specific interventions; and, the reluctance of some providers or partners to provide data⁴.</p> <p>Information, such as that provided by the JSNA, does provide the context for tackling domestic abuse, but the Strategy does not provide a clear data driven context for domestic abuse and so it is unclear in the Strategy how intelligence specifically drives actions, or helps to define outcomes (without which the Strategy can appear generic, rather than Swindon / Wiltshire specific).</p> <p>Outside of the Strategy, performance data is collected⁵ and analysed by the Performance Team, who provide quarterly reports to the Community Safety Partnership and the Strategic Board. Currently this data provides mainly geographical information on where domestic abuse occurs and spikes in incidents e.g. around Christmas. There are some targeted responses (e.g. awareness campaigns that link with these spikes in data), but other than this, it is not clear how the information drives the Strategy (e.g. to target identified hotspots or preventative activities towards potential victims).</p>	<p>The Community Safety Partnership or the Domestic Abuse and VAWG Strategic Board should identify the data needs regarding domestic abuse.</p> <p>Methods for collection and analysing of this data should be established and then used to continually inform the basis of the Strategy and priorities in the Action Plan, especially for providing proactive strategies for tackling domestic abuse.</p> <p>Priority: High</p> <p>Consideration should be given to including relevant data and other intelligence in the Strategy (as opposed to merely linking to it) to illustrate the national and local context for the domestic abuse approach and to demonstrate the basis of specific areas of focus.</p> <p>Priority: Low</p>	<p>Community Safety Team Leader</p> <p>April 2017</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Strongly linked to AP1.2 above.</p> <p>The current JSNA (and other) data provides a strong case for tackling DA in Swindon and therefore needs to be more explicit in the Strategy.</p> <p>The JSNA will be due for updating soon, which will become the basis for the refresh of the Strategy due in 2017.</p>

⁴ In particular this referred to the data currently received from the support service, but which is being addressed through the retendering of the support service. The other main issue to be noted was the organisation Home Truths, who do not generally cooperate with requests for data, despite SBC funding a crèche.

⁵ Most data currently collected is from MARAC and the Police (mainly via PPD1s, which are essentially a DA risk assessment, and supplemented by further Police data about incidents and arrests). Further information is provided by Children, who supplement the PPD1 information received from the Police with further information known to the LA from Capita One, the electronic management system used by Children Services.

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Ref.	Finding	Recommendation	Responsible Officer and Timescale	Management Response
1	<i>Risk Area: Domestic Abuse Strategy</i>			
1.4	<p>Resources and Partner Commitment</p> <p>There were a range of opinions regarding the commitment of partner agencies to the domestic abuse agenda, but most officers were satisfied that the membership and participation of agencies was strong. However, outside of the period in the Strategy (i.e. 2015-2017), it is not clear what future commitment there is from partners to the domestic abuse agenda and there is therefore a risk that the strategy has a lack of credibility going forward and may not be sustainable.</p> <p>At the very least, there is a gap regarding resource commitments. As noted above in AP1.1, the Strategy is not clear as to the resource requirements for delivering actions and so the full commitment of partner agencies is not clear (in physical monies and in staff time) for delivering aspects of the strategy for which they could / should be responsible for.</p> <p>It is understood from officers that if there is a physical cost additional to an officer's time, the Council will generally have to meet this. This was provided as the reason for some of the actions not yet being completed or progressed.</p> <p>External resource generation is included in the Action Plan and is required in order to implement several actions. Whilst this is reasonable to explore, it may not be a sustainable model and so a more defined commitment from partners is necessary to ensure future domestic abuse action can be maintained.</p>	<p>Responsibilities of agencies for domestic abuse should be clearly defined, with clear ownership and commitment gained from all partner agencies for future resourcing of activities. For example, this could be via a formal (but not overly burdensome), three to five year partnership agreement to ensure all key partners are committed to the Domestic Abuse Strategy in the short, medium and long-term. At the very least, key partners should contribute to a foreword for the Strategy to endorse their commitment to domestic abuse (see also AP1.6). Exploration for establishing a pooled fund for domestic abuse should also be undertaken to evaluate if this is a viable option for funding activities going forward.</p> <p>Priority: High</p>	<p>Community Safety Team Leader</p> <p>April 2017</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>A foreword from partners will be added to the Strategy, as it has been in previous versions.</p> <p>The new structure and membership of the DA Board and Groups provides a strong chance for clearer ownership and contribution from agencies and the right people are in the right place to commit resources to actions where necessary.</p> <p>Wiltshire has a pooled budget and this can work, but if this is not possible in Swindon, then at the very least, there is a need to identify where separate pots of money are and how these will join together going forward.</p>

Swindon Internal Audit Services: Domestic Abuse Strategy

Ref.	Finding	Recommendation	Responsible Officer and Timescale	Management Response
1	<i>Risk Area: Domestic Abuse Strategy</i>			
1.5	<p>Strategy - Potential Gaps in DA Priorities</p> <p>The 2015-17 Strategy was reviewed and no major gaps in terms of coverage were identified; the document provides a high level overview of priorities for tackling domestic abuse. However, some potential gaps were identified during the audit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the Strategy was formed, there has been a decision to include the remit regarding violence against women and girls (VAWG). Although it should be noted that those spoken with were generally agreed that this is covered sufficiently, the Auditor does not believe the current Strategy, Action Plan and Community Safety Partnership (and sub-group) Terms of References are clear as to ownership or actions relating to this agenda. • Although most Strategies reviewed during the audit (including Swindon's) refer to an indiscriminate commitment to all victims, there was a lack of explicit focus or objectives relating to minority groups (e.g. BME, LGBT, men etc.) and how complex issues regarding these groups will be addressed. • Most officers spoken with during the audit acknowledged challenges in engaging with schools. However, the Strategy has only a single reference to 'working with educational establishments' and appears to have no specific emphasis on strategies for improving this. • It is not clear the extent that victims and survivors have contributed to and shaped the Strategy. 	<p>The Strategy should be reviewed in the context of including more explicitly the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to and actions relating to the wider VAWG remit. • Particular objectives, actions and priorities regarding minority groups that may be potentially affected by domestic abuse. • A clear priority for improving engagement with Schools and Colleges. • Victims and survivors (and where appropriate, perpetrators) should be given ample opportunity to inform the Strategy and ongoing domestic abuse priorities. Where this happens, this should be reflected clearly in the Strategy document. <p>Any update of the Strategy should be supported by a suitable publicity campaign aimed at key stakeholders to ensure they are aware of any changes / improvements made.</p> <p>Priority: Medium</p>	<p>Community Safety Team Leader</p> <p>April 2017</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>The VAWG aspect of the Strategy is developing and the CSP and DA sub groups have a clear message that VAWG is a significant responsibility of the DA Strategy. This will be reflected in the refresh of the Action Plan, as above.</p> <p>Similar for minority groups; this is in the Strategy, but greater attention will be given to it in the new Action Plan in future.</p>

Swindon Internal Audit Services: Domestic Abuse Strategy

Ref.	Finding	Recommendation	Responsible Officer and Timescale	Management Response
1	<i>Risk Area: Domestic Abuse Strategy</i>			
1.6	<p>Strategy - General Omissions</p> <p>In addition to the findings highlighted elsewhere in this action plan, some further general potential areas for improvement were identified during the audit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The risks to the achievement of objectives are not acknowledged in the Strategy (for example those associated with a lack of sustainable future resources and the impact the achievement of DA objectives). The Community Safety Partnership structure and responsibilities of subgroups are not explicit in the Swindon Strategy. The introduction to Swindon's Strategy is not attributed to a named lead officer(s); this may imply a lack of commitment to reducing Domestic Abuse. The Strategy does not refer to what has been done since the last strategy and what progress has been made in tackling domestic abuse. The Strategy for the previous period (2013-14) is almost word for word, exactly the same, which implies no discernible progress has been made. It is not clear from the Strategy what a person should do or who they should contact if they are concerned about Domestic Abuse. It is acknowledged that this is a strategy rather than a procedure document, but someone may chance upon the strategy with a concern regarding domestic abuse, and without this signpost, an opportunity may be lost for someone to come forward. The CSP website links to the old Domestic Abuse Strategy from 2014-15. 	<p>Upon refreshing the Swindon and Wiltshire Strategy to Reduce Domestic Abuse, the following additions should be considered for inclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The risks to the achievement of Strategy objectives, along with the actions for how these will be mitigated. Reference to the role and structure of the Community Safety Partnership and subgroups. A foreword by a named lead officer / senior manager from each key agency that demonstrates an ongoing commitment to the Strategy (see also AP1.4). Progress and achievements made since (and due to) the previous Strategy. Contact details for where to raise a domestic abuse concern. The up to date Strategy should be available on the CSP website. <p>As above in AP1.5, any changes made should be suitably publicised to key stakeholders to maximise awareness of ongoing priorities.</p> <p>Priority: Medium</p>	<p>Community Safety Team Leader</p> <p>April 2017</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>This will inform the health check of the Strategy when it is due to be refreshed in 2017, which is likely to be after April. It should be noted that the existing Strategy was also a refresh of the previous 2014-15 Strategy, which is why the documents are very similar. The key themes are all still relevant and so the difference in the detail should be in the action planning. The link to the new Strategy on the website has been raised in the past and will be followed up.</p>

Swindon Internal Audit Services: Domestic Abuse Strategy

Ref.	Finding	Recommendation	Responsible Officer and Timescale	Management Response
1	<i>Risk Area: Domestic Abuse Strategy</i>			
1.7	<p>Community Safety Partnership Governance</p> <p>There is a formally defined Community Safety Partnership structure that governs the oversight of domestic abuse work, most of which, has only been in place since July 2016.</p> <p><u>Terms of Reference</u></p> <p>These have been established for these groups, but there was some concern from officers spoken with during the audit that duplication of coverage exists between groups, in particular between the Strategic Board and the Management and Quality Assurance Group.</p> <p><u>Membership</u></p> <p>Membership is generally strong, but there is a lack of representation from Schools or someone in the Council with responsibilities in this area (e.g. Head of Education, Healthy Schools co-ordinator). This is a gap, given the difficulties in securing their engagement.</p> <p>In addition, although victim representation is part of the membership of the Domestic Abuse Board (in their Terms of Reference), there does not appear to be any representation of victims at meetings.</p> <p><u>Community Safety Partnership Chair</u></p> <p>The current chair of the Community Safety Partnership is the Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness (who is lead for reducing domestic violence and abuse).</p> <p>A recommendation made in a peer review for 'Ending Gang and Youth Violence' in Swindon (carried out by the Home Office in January 2016) stated that, although member scrutiny was considered vital to the board, the chair of the Community Safety Partnership should be a non-member, to provide strategic executive level commitment to the role.</p>	<p>It should be verified with participants that they are satisfied with the roles and responsibilities of each group.</p> <p>Priority: Medium</p> <p>It should also be established whether schools / educational establishments should be represented on the Domestic Abuse groups.</p> <p>Victim representation should be secured where possible for inclusion at relevant Domestic Abuse sub-groups.</p> <p>Priority: Medium</p> <p>It should be discussed at Community Safety Partnership whether there should be any executive restrictions on the position of Community Safety Partnership chair, or if current arrangements are appropriate.</p> <p>Priority: Low</p>	<p>Community Safety Team Leader</p> <p>April 2017</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>However, in regards to Schools, the attendance of the Director of Children Services is considered sufficient to represent the views of Schools, as the Head of Education is a direct report. The Head of Education can and will be invited to attend meetings as necessary.</p> <p>There are no immediate concerns with the Chair of the CSP. As the CSP is not a legal entity, having a Councillor as Chair provides profile for DA and ensures direct accountability into Cabinet. CSP will though be asked to reflect on this, to ensure this is still appropriate. In the past, the Chair has rotated between agencies and this can have its benefits, as can having an independent chair, as is the case at LSAB / LSCB. The Chair has already declared they will not be involved, to ensure the objectivity of the decision.</p>

Swindon Internal Audit Services: Domestic Abuse Strategy

Ref.	Finding	Recommendation	Responsible Officer and Timescale	Management Response
1	<i>Risk Area: Domestic Abuse Strategy</i>			
1.8	<p>Quality Assurance (QA)</p> <p>QA is the responsibility of the recently created Domestic Abuse and VAWG Management and QA Group.</p> <p>This is a new addition to the Community Safety Partnership Domestic Abuse structure and although some discussion has taken place at this group to determine how this role will be fulfilled, there is not currently a defined framework within which their QA responsibilities will operate.</p> <p>The Group also has responsibility for overseeing MARAC and ensuring recommendations from Domestic Homicide Reviews are implemented. It is not clear however, if there is a similar review for near misses and if there is a structured approach for identifying and reviewing these when appropriate.</p>	<p>The Domestic Abuse and VAWG Strategic Board should define their expectations of the QA function of the Domestic Abuse and VAWG Management and QA Group. Clear objectives and, where necessary, methodology for undertaking QA should also be discussed and decided upon.</p> <p>The Group's role in identifying and reviewing near misses should also be considered and defined.</p> <p>Priority: Medium</p>	<p>Community Safety Team Leader</p> <p>April 2017</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>The Group have only met twice so far and are still finding their way and so this is to be developed.</p> <p>The Group will have a work programme in place to provide some structure for their QA role, that will include at least two 'deep-dives' of individual processes through the year.</p>

Swindon Internal Audit Services: Domestic Abuse Strategy

Ref.	Finding	Recommendation	Responsible Officer and Timescale	Management Response
1	<i>Risk Area: Domestic Abuse Strategy</i>			
1.9	<p>Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC)</p> <p>MARAC is a process established by SafeLives (a Domestic Abuse charity) as a method of reviewing high risk Domestic Abuse cases. The process in Swindon was regarded as strong by most officers spoken with during the audit and it was stated that previous self-assessments and observations by SafeLives have been positive. SafeLives recommends a self-assessment (or peer review from another MARAC) take place every 2 years. However, the last self-assessment was in 2012.</p> <p>A MARAC protocol was drafted in 2012 but is incomplete. Although it was acknowledged that this is out of date, it was not considered a priority because the process is so well embedded. However, further anecdotal issues were raised during the audit that may be a consequence of the Protocol being out of date. For example, it was raised by some officers that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case volumes are too large and unsustainable. • Information is not being shared prior to meetings. • The number of repeats is still high⁶. • There is a potential single point of failure, with the Chair (from the Police) providing the majority of direction for prompting information sharing, risk identification and action planning. • There may be potential duplication when MARAC discusses cases with child protection implications, • Although a victim based process, there is a lack of focus on perpetrators and thus the cause of abuse. 	<p>Consideration should be given to undertaking a SafeLives self-assessment or inviting another MARAC to undertake a peer review of Swindon's process.</p> <p>In addition, the MARAC Operating Protocol should be reviewed and updated, with specific consideration given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relationship with other processes (e.g. child protection planning), • Prioritisation of cases to ensure only the highest risk cases are being referred, • The Domestic Abuse and VAWG Management and QA Group's responsibilities for overseeing the performance of MARAC, in particular, establishing action to tackle high repeats (which should be incorporated in the Strategy where necessary). • Action planning in relation to perpetrators, • Responsibility for circulating case notes prior to meetings. <p>An updated Protocol should be circulated to members of MARAC to ensure understanding of the process and reduce any potential over-reliance on individual members.</p> <p>Priority: Medium</p>	<p>Community Safety Team Leader</p> <p>April 2017</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>This is integral to DA work and a refresh of the Protocol is in progress.</p> <p>Work has taken place to ensure the prioritisation of MARACs is robust. A recent dip sample of twenty repeat MARAC cases found that there were three that may not have met the criteria, which were then discussed with SafeLives, who subsequently agreed that these did.</p> <p>Admin within the Police now also provides a review of MARAC agendas prior to cases being heard at MARAC.</p> <p>For perpetrators, there are plans to introduce an 'Enforcement Officer' role to make full use of anti-social behaviour tools against serial perpetrators. However, this requires funding and potentially further capacity in Legal and so is still being developed.</p>

⁶ Although it should be noted that most recent figures for April-June 2016 show repeats in the last three months have just fallen in line with current SafeLives performance thresholds.

Standard Audit Opinions

The audit opinion is based on two different criteria the first is materiality of the system and its impact on the Council if there was a system failure. This has been split into High, Medium or Low.

The second criteria is the standard of control found within the system audited. This has been categorised into 4 different levels i.e. high; satisfactory; significant improvements required and fundamental weaknesses identified. Each of these categories has a standard opinion (see below).

The combination of these two factors gives an overall risk assessment to the Council of one of four scores i.e. significant, of concern, moderate or minimal (see Overall Opinion section in the main report).

Standard Audit Opinion System Control

Audit Opinion 1. *High standard*

The auditor completing the review concluded the significant controls are in place and operating effectively and only minor recommendations have been made

Audit Opinion 2. *Satisfactory standard*

The auditor completing the review concluded that most of the significant controls are in place and operating satisfactorily although some non-compliance was identified and therefore there is scope for improvement.

Audit Opinion 3. *Significant improvements required*

The auditor completing the review concluded that existing procedures needed to be improved to ensure that they are fully reliable. A number of significant recommendations have been made to improve missing or failing controls.

Audit Opinion 4. *Fundamental weaknesses identified*

The auditor completing the review concluded that the matters arising from the review are sufficiently significant to place doubt on the reliability of the procedures reviewed. Implementation of the recommendations made is a priority to ensure that reliance can be placed on the system.

Acknowledgements

Internal Audit would like to acknowledge and thank the following Officers who contributed to the review:

Name	Job Title
Arlene Griffin	Housing Business Development Manager
Cherry Jones	Director of Public Health
Councillor Oliver Donachie	Councillor and Chair of the Community Safety Partnership
Doug Bale	Adult Safeguarding Manager
Ian Stenner	Commissioner Supported Housing
Jeanette Chipping	Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Missing Manager
Karen Reeve	Director - Children's Services
Lin Williams	Domestic Violence Co-ordinator
Mike Ash	Head of Housing Management and Community Safety
Sally Cherrington	Performance Analyst (Community Safety and NEET and RPA)
Steven Kensington	Community Safety Team Leader

AP1.1 - Domestic Abuse Action Planning and Prioritisation - Full Finding

The Strategy states that action plans will be clear as to objectives, actions, outputs and outcomes and will show the lead agencies and resource required. Swindon has an Action Plan in place, this was reviewed and the following observations made:

- Actions are vague and not clear as to their objectives or the outcomes expected of the action(s);
- Timescales are included against actions, but some have passed, with progress against the actions unclear.
- There was no further basis on which priorities for actions have been assigned and therefore it is unclear which actions are most important.
- Actions are structured under the five themes in the Strategy, which has led to some actions being duplicated.
- Some priorities, identified by officers during the review, are missing from the Action Plan (e.g. re-commissioning of the support service in 2016/17).
- The outputs / resources required to implement actions are not referred to at all. It is unclear which carry a cost and if so, from where this will be met.
- For twenty-six of the thirty-three actions (approx. 80%), the Lead Officer is the DA Reduction Co-ordinator, despite their role being one of coordination, rather than delivery. The role of partner agencies in delivering the action plan is not clear.
- Although it is not required by the Strategy, there is not a risk assessment of actions to determine where implementation may be at risk, or to flag up where progress is behind schedule.
- There is no evidence (albeit from a limited number of meetings taken place thus far) that the Action Plan is being reviewed at meetings to review progress and allocate lead officers from appropriate agencies.

A sample of actions from the Action Plan was selected and discussed with the DV Reduction Co-ordinator to review progress. It was found that many of the actions are still outstanding, with limited progress made in some areas, despite some having gone past their expected completion date.

There are legitimate reasons for the lack of action in these cases, but this highlighted that the current Action Plan is overly ambitious, especially when considering the resource available in which to deliver these activities.

Swindon Internal Audit Services: Domestic Abuse Strategy

Action Plan Reference and Action	Responsible Officer and Date	Progress (based on discussions with DV Reduction Co-ordinator)
1.7 - Develop standardised responses to reporting- shared response / signposting / referral. Same service regardless of organisation	DV Reduction Co-ordinator / Service Providers / DA Forum Dec 2016	This would be great in an ideal world, but in reality there is a lot of work to be done to get to this stage. There are plans for other actions to feed into this (e.g. performing a 24-hour 'snapshot') but this will not be achieved by December.
1.10 - Monitor and implement recommendations from DHR	DV Reduction Co-ordinator / DASG Jun 2016	All but one has been achieved; progress overseen by the previous DA Steering Group.
2.1 - Develop School engagement - healthy relationships both primary/secondary. Make agenda relevant to schools – link to truancy / exclusions. Engage through head teachers forum	Healthy Schools Co-ordinator / DV Reduction Co-ordinator / LSCB Dec 2016	The report from the Insight Team has addressed some of these issues around alternative approaches and now looking at next steps, with the Insight Team leading on this to see how we best move forward. Ongoing.
4.1 – What agencies training wants / needs are; Questionnaire / Needs Assessment to inform and develop Training Strategy	DV Reduction Co-ordinator / DASG Feb 2016	The Support Service (currently provided by Women's Aid) is commissioned to run some training. Some e-learning is in place in children, but this is fragmented and still way off from being completed.
4.2 – Develop and implement a Communications Strategy targeting frontline staff – GPS, Health visitors, GP staff, pharmacies, GWH around Health and Wellbeing; Campaign on social media / cyber bullying and how it's used by abusers. Programme of train the trainer for cascading training to staff across agencies.	DV Reduction Co-ordinator / Communications Team / Awareness Sub Group Health Project workers / Community navigators / Communications strategy Jul 2016	As above, this is still way off and so still in development.
5.1 – Identify effective ways of measuring outcomes. What does success look like and how to ensure victims are safe.	DASG/Scrutiny Panel Mar 2017	This is about evidence, which is something SBC have not been great at in this area thus far. Need to define what success looks like, taking into consideration that this may be different for different agencies and so difficult to ascertain. Still need to get heads around this and so acknowledged as a weakness.
5.3 – Identify what data is collected and by whom, its usefulness and what is required for the future	DASG / DV Reduction Co-ordinator / Performance Analyst / partner organisations / Community Safety Team Leader Mar 2016	As above - still need to do; would be useful in determining one or two other priorities if this were in place.

Although some officers were positive as to the achievability of these actions, in reality, it is difficult to see how this can be the case within the resource constraints. Other officers did raise concerns that the Strategy may lack focus, with the majority of work around DA still being mostly reactive. It was suggested that changes to the Strategy are required to work differently within the available resource, for example, by targeting resources on key areas (e.g. perpetrators, potential victims), rather than spreading current resources thinly across numerous, extensive priorities.

AP1.2 - Outcomes and Performance Measurement

There are no defined outcomes or performance measures in the Strategy, outside of general objectives to reduce the prevalence of DA and increase reporting and awareness. Measuring the success of the strategy and individual elements within is therefore not clear and it is difficult to establish that SBC and other agencies are contributing to improvements. For example, the JSNA estimates Swindon has higher levels of DA than its neighbours. However, current performance measurement makes it difficult to conclude whether this is due to better reporting of DA in Swindon, or if this indicates higher levels of DA.

A lack of clearly defined outcomes also impacts on the ability to undertake effective, outcome-based commissioning of services.

One measure that does exist is repeat incidents through MARAC. However, this measure is absent in the strategy and does not provide clarity of how partners are performing below the threshold for MARAC (i.e. at a preventative level).

It is accepted by the auditor that there are difficulties in determining multi-agency targets for DA, as individual agencies may have differing priorities and some measures may be conflicting (e.g. reducing DA incidences vs. the want to increase reporting).

The Chair of the CSP outlined further considerations relating to the setting of DA performance measures:

- All partners need to be aligned about what good performance is and what measures are telling us about performance.
- Measures need to take into account the realistic impacts of certain strategies, to ensure the actions are being appraised fairly in the context of their realistic short, medium and longer term aims.
- Any framework needs to ensure the human element is not lost, and victims are not processed or analysed as clinical statistics. The Domestic Violence Reduction Coordinator also raised the potential for measuring performance via less quantitative means and referred to a recent case study presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board that was well received and perhaps better communicated the positive impact of the Strategy.

Defining performance measures for DA is a common difficulty facing other LAs, based on the strategies reviewed during the audit⁷, but there were some examples where these were better defined (*continued overleaf*).

⁷ This was also an issue identified in Ofsted's recent joint targeted area inspection of Salford, where it found that a "lack of effective performance monitoring and evaluation in relation to children living with domestic abuse from a multi-agency perspective does not enable the CSP to understand fully the day-to-day experiences of children living with domestic abuse or the effectiveness of the response from each of the agencies both individually and collectively."

Swindon Internal Audit Services: Domestic Abuse Strategy

The following is a page taken from the Essex, Thurrock and Southend - Joint Commissioning Strategy for Domestic Abuse 2015-20 and provides an example of outcomes and potential performance measures that might be used for reviewing the success of a DA Strategy.⁸

Strategy Summary - Outcomes and Indicators of Success

Joint Commissioning Strategy for Domestic Abuse

Vision - Everyone in Essex lives a life free from Domestic Abuse

Young people enjoy healthy relationships

- Number of young victims and percentage of repeat victims
- Demonstration of a good understanding of healthy relationships
- Number of young perpetrators and percentage of repeat perpetration

Victims (Adults and Children) and those at risk of experiencing domestic abuse feel and are safe

- Timeliness of multi-agency information sharing
- Access to pertinent and appropriate information, guidance and specialist support (Victims and their children)
- Number and percentage of repeat incidents
- Impact of engagement with support services

Victims (Adults and Children) are able to recover and move on to live independently

- Number of victims requiring relocation
- Percentage of victims accessing education, training and employment
- Percentage of victims accessing appropriate support services
- Proportion of known victims identified in health settings and referred to support services

Perpetrators are prevented from causing physical and emotional harm

- Number of repeat victims
- Operation Shield Total Harm Score
- Number and proportion of successful prosecutions
- Proportion and proportion of positive disposals
- Number of perpetrators identified and referred into behaviour change programmes
- Effective completion of behaviour change programmes

Communities have a greater awareness of what an abusive relationship is and how to report it and as a consequence feel safer

- Access to relevant and appropriate information, guidance and specialist support
- Prevalence rates of domestic abuse incidents in ethnic minority communities
- Training sessions provided and number of front-line practitioners attending
- Co-ordinated domestic abuse campaigns delivered

⁸ Replicated directly from the Essex, Thurrock and Southend Strategy; any wording or grammatical errors within are therefore copied verbatim from this document.

Potential Sources of Information

The following are potential sources of DA information, whereby people working in these agencies / businesses may receive information relating to an incident of DA outside of formal reporting processes. These are based on documents and articles researched during the audit.

Some of these are already part of the CSP's knowledge base, but those that are not, which provide less formal routes to DA reporting, could be considered going forward for inclusion in targeting training and awareness resources, e.g. providing workers in these areas with adequate training regarding identifying the signs of abuse and how to report these to the appropriate agency.

- Police
- Council Services
 - Children Services
 - Adult Services
 - Public Health
 - Housing / Homelessness
 - Property Services / Housing Maintenance
 - The One Stop Shop / Customer Services
 - Localities / Community Champions
- Housing Associations / Private landlords
- Schools / Colleges
- GPs / Doctors / Hospitals / Dentists
- Probation Services
- Vets
- Hairdressers
- Employers
- Sports Clubs
- Faith groups
- Jobcentre
- Community Centres / Youth Centres
- Social Media
- Charities / Support Services (e.g. Women's Aid / Salvation Army / NCPCC / Swindon Foodbank)

Glossary of Terms

BME - Black and minority ethnic

CSP - Community Safety Partnership; made up of statutory partners in Swindon and Wiltshire, including police, fire and rescue service, councils, NHS and probation services.

DA - Domestic Abuse; any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional.

Health and Wellbeing Board - The Health and Social Care Act 2012 establishes health and wellbeing boards as a forum where key leaders from the health and care system work together to improve the health and wellbeing of their local population and reduce health inequalities. Board members will collaborate to understand their local community's needs, agree priorities and encourage commissioners to work in a more joined up way.

IDVA - Independent Domestic Violence Advisor

JSNA - Joint Strategic Needs Assessment; the Health and Wellbeing Board (see above) has a statutory responsibility to prepare a JSNA for Swindon. It draws together key themes from available evidence and describes the current and future health and wellbeing needs of the people of Swindon and is the principal workstream to inform the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The JSNA highlights the importance of local partners working together to improve health and wellbeing and to reduce inequalities.

LA - Local Authority

LGBT - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender

LSAB - Local safeguarding Adult Board - is a multi-agency partnership, which actively engages in providing better protection for individuals needing care and support. Whilst safeguarding adults' protocols refer to all people over the age of 18 years and who fit the definition of a vulnerable adult, the majority of alerts and/or concerns raised fall within people aged 65 years and over.

LSCB - Local safeguarding Children Board – Local partnership boards were set up by the Government as part of the system of checks and balances to make sure that partner agencies are held to account about how children and young people are kept safe and that they receive consistent and excellent provision.

MARAC - Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences for domestic abuse, a case conference meeting for victims identified at highest risk. It provides a forum for sharing information and taking action that will reduce harm. MARACs are outcome focused. Attendance is by key agencies from the statutory and voluntary sector working in the field of domestic abuse.

PCC - Police and Crime Commissioner

QA - Quality Assurance

VAWG - Violence Against Women and Girls; Includes domestic violence; forced marriage; honour-based violence; female genital mutilation; rape and sexual offences; prostitution; trafficking; child abuse; and pornography.

Swindon Internal Audit Services: Domestic Abuse Strategy

APPENDIX G

Partner Agencies Contributing to the Domestic Abuse Strategy and Community Safety Partnership

