

# **Domestic Violence and Abuse:**

## **The impact on children and young people Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)**

**Health and Wellbeing Board**

**8<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

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Author:	Acting Director of Public Health
Wards:	All
Locality Affected:	All
Parishes Affected:	All

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### **1. Purpose and Reasons**

- 1.1 To inform the Health and Wellbeing Board of the findings of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) on Domestic violence and abuse: the impact on children and young people, seek support for the recommendations and raise awareness of the needs of children and young people who are exposed to domestic violence and abuse.
- 1.2 Responsibility for responding to domestic violence and abuse is spread across a wide range of agencies and in addition to the human and emotional toll, it places costly demands on public services, with much of the focus being on the adult victims and perpetrators. This JSNA focuses on children and young people who have been exposed to domestic violence and abuse within their families or who are themselves within abusive teenage relationships. The findings of the JSNA inform a range of recommendations across agencies, to ultimately improve the outcomes for children and young people.

### **2. Recommendations**

The Board is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note and agree the recommendations from the Domestic Violence and Abuse: the impact on children and young people JSNA bulletin. (Appendix One)
- 2.2 Support the development of an action plan for implementation of the recommendations.

### **3. Detail**

- 3.1 Domestic violence and abuse (DA) is a complex and challenging social problem within families, which is largely hidden and underreported and disproportionately affects women and children as victims. It is more likely than other crimes to have repeat victimisation.
- 3.2 The government definition of domestic violence and domestic abuse (2013) includes 16 and 17 year olds for the first time:

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*“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or 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. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse: physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, or financial.”*

- 3.3 Based on information from the Crime Survey for England and Wales we estimate that in Swindon 4,800 women aged 16-59 in Swindon have been victims of DA within the past year.  
Female victims are more likely than male victims to suffer from emotional and financial abuse, threats and sexual assault.
- 3.4 National research found that almost a quarter of young adults reported having been exposed to DA in their family during childhood.
- 3.5 In Swindon we are aware of approximately 1000 children and young people each year who are exposed to DA. More than 40% of these are children under five, highlighting a significant concern, as what happens in early life is critically important for children’s development, health and wellbeing. A further 30% are primary school age. Some of the children are exposed to DA on more than one occasion.
- 3.6 Exposure to domestic abuse often leads to children exhibiting symptoms of disturbance during childhood which will vary depending on their age and stage of development. Children can develop depression, anxiety and aggression as a consequence of living with DA and may show increases in short and long term anti-social behaviour such as missing school, getting into fights, and cruelty to animals. Adverse effects are less likely when the DA is mild and short-lived or when they have at least one person in the family who responds to their developmental needs. When possible, maintaining friendships and continuity at school is very important.
- 3.7 The impact on children is aggravated by a range of factors such as the severity of the violence, a combination with problem drinking, drug misuse, mental illness or learning disability, and witnessing the sexual and physical abuse. It is often the combination of factors which can co-exist with domestic abuse that have been found to increase the risk of harm to children and this is reinforced by the findings from Serious Case Reviews.
- 3.5 Among children who have been directly abused there are a high number who have also experienced DA. In Swindon an audit of children on the child protection register was undertaken in 2009 and found that 58% of children on a child protection plan had DA noted as one of the risk factors.

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- 3.6 Research shows the impact of domestic violence on young people and an association with forming abusive relationships of their own. A national study of high risk DA victims aged under 18, found that in addition to experiencing physical and sexual violence, they often have associated health related vulnerabilities including self-harm, mental health problems and pregnancy. Internet and mobile technologies are often used to extend coercion and control within abusive relationships.
- 3.7 A wide range of agencies providing services for adults, families and children and young people come into contact with families experiencing DA. These include health, social care, education, criminal justice, voluntary and community sector, housing and DV specialist agencies.
- 3.8 Within the criminal justice system in Swindon in 2012 there has been an increase in repeat DA incidents, a reduction in total numbers of prosecutions of DA perpetrators and loss of the specialist DA courts.
- 3.9 Specialist DA services in Swindon include Swindon Women's Aid which is commissioned to provide a 24 hour helpline, a Women's Refuge, an Outreach service and an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) service. Hometruths is a Swindon based not-for-profit social enterprise which also offers DA services including IDVA provision.
- 3.10 DA victims are frequent users of health services, and present with symptoms including depression or anxiety, self-harm, tiredness, chronic pain, sexually transmitted infections, injuries or non-specific symptoms. They are more likely to be admitted to Hospital and are issued with more prescriptions. Nationally more than 1% of Emergency Department (ED) visits are due to domestic abuse.
- 3.11 More than 80% of the Swindon children we know have been exposed to DA, do not have any contact with Children's Social Services. Of those that do, less than 2% were on a child protection plan and less than 1% became children in care.
- 3.12 A set of recommendations to improve outcomes have been developed based on the findings in the JSNA.
- 3.12.1 Review current governance arrangements to ensure that the right strategic and operational partners are represented in a local partnership to prevent domestic violence and abuse, including focus on the needs of children and young people.
- 3.12.2 Improve the knowledge, skills and confidence of staff to identify DA and respond appropriately, through a robust training framework and developed pathways into specialist services.
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- 3.12.3        Develop information sharing about DA that is timely, purposeful, is supported by up to date protocols and includes information reaching the person who knows the child or young person.
- 3.12.4        Ensure that assessments of risk and impact focus on children as well as adult victims and that agencies work together to this end.
- 3.12.5        Develop the opportunities during pregnancy and early years for parents to disclose DA and access services and ensure that parenting programmes include a focus on DA.
- 3.12.6        Develop the opportunities for children experiencing DA to seek help, support and access to therapeutic services.
- 3.12.7        Improve recognition of DA in teenage relationships, both among young people and staff, backed up by a programme supporting teenage victims and perpetrators to develop non-abusive relationships.
- 3.12.8        Provide PSHE which promotes healthy relationships, including awareness of DA, and promote emotional wellbeing through a whole school approach.
- 3.12.9        Embed a whole-family approach, including DA, in adult and children services across Swindon.
- 3.12.10       Provide non-mandated programmes for perpetrators who wish to change their behaviour, including an appropriate programme for those aged under 18.
- 3.12.11       Improve the identification of DA and pathways to support during consultations with health professionals
- 3.12.12       Refer identified issues on the management of domestic abuse within the criminal justice process to the Criminal Justice Board for further scrutiny.

#### **4. Alternative Options**

- 4.1        Not to support the recommendations identified in the JSNA bulletin.'

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### **5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management**

#### Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 If additional resources are needed to implement these recommendations a detailed business case will be developed.

#### Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 Legal and human rights have been taken into consideration in the preparation of this report. It is considered that the recommendations are compatible with convention rights.
- 5.3 In consideration of any future guidance and an understanding of best practice, the Council will work with the NHS and other service providers to ensure that equalities and a respect for human rights are at the heart of the Swindon JSNA, that everyone in Swindon has fair access to services and are free from discrimination.

#### All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.4 The Domestic Violence and Abuse: the impact on children and young people JSNA highlights a number of areas of focus to improve outcomes for children and young people exposed to DA.

#### Links to One Swindon, Strategic Objectives, Plans and Policies

- 5.5 Improving outcomes for children and young people exposed to DA is consistent with strategic outcomes set out in One Swindon, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Children and Young People Early support Strategy.

#### Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.6 A Diversity Impact Assessment has not been completed at this stage.
- 5.7 The Domestic Violence and Abuse: the impact on children and young people JSNA considers the needs of communities most at risk of poor outcomes resulting from exposure to DA. Any future actions or service redesign will reflect the needs and diversity of Swindon communities.

#### Risk Management

- 5.8 No specific risks identified at this stage for this report.

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### **6. Consultees**

- 6.1 The Board Director Finance, Revenues, Benefits and Property (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

### **7. Background Papers**

- 7.1 None

### **8. Appendices**

- 8.1 Appendix one: Domestic Violence and Abuse: the impact on children and young people JSNA bulletin.