

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 12 th December 2023
Report Subject	Domestic abuse and sexual violence support in Flintshire
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Planning, Public Health, and Public Protection
Report Author	Chief Officer – Planning, Environment & Economy
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with a broad overview of the work undertaken to support domestic abuse and sexual violence across North Wales, with a specific focus on Flintshire. It will also highlight the obligations of Flintshire County Council under the Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To note the contents of the report
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	OBLIGATIONS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND DOMESTIC ABUSE FUNDING (WALES) ACT 2015
1.01	The Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 sets out the arrangements for the prevention of gender-based violence, domestic abuse, and sexual violence, as well as protection for victims and support for those affected. The Act requires “relevant authorities” (Local Authorities, Local Health Boards, Fire and Rescue Services and Wales Ambulance Trust) to work together to develop and deliver local/regional strategies to address all issues relating to this agenda.

1.02	In 2016 statutory partners in North Wales established a Violence Against Women Sexual Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Board in order to meet the requirements of the 2015 Act. In addition, a regional needs assessment was commissioned, which formed the basis of a VAWDASV strategy. Since 2019 the work of the VAWDASV Board has been incorporated into the North Wales Vulnerability and Exploitation Board.
1.03	Funding to deliver the VAWDASV strategy has been provided by Welsh Government since 2016. Several services are delivered due to this funding, which are supported by a regional team of support officers who are hosted by Flintshire County Council.
1.04	An important aspect of the obligations placed upon the responsible authorities has been training around VAWDASV. The Welsh Government's National Training Framework distinguishes the sort of training a workforce are required to undertake in accordance with their job role. This ranges from an online awareness programme, expected to be completed by all local authority employees; specialist training for frontline officers; through to high level, strategic understanding for senior leaders.
1.05	Flintshire County Council have achieved 73% workforce completion rate for Group 1 (e-learning) for the National Training Framework in 2022/23, one of the highest in North Wales. Turnover of staff make the target set out by Welsh Government, of 100%, very difficult to achieve, however managers are expected to highlight the importance of completing this training to officers. For the first two quarters of 23/24 the completion rate stands at 71% of the workforce.
1.06	The roll-out of training for Groups 2 and 3 has also commenced. This training is for officers working on the frontline with vulnerable people. To date, 338 Flintshire officers have undertaken this training.
2.00	KEY FINDINGS FROM NORTH WALES NEEDS ASSESSMENT
2.01	The Covid Pandemic had a significant impact on the delivery of specialist services in North Wales, and led to significant changes in the ways in which services were delivered. Most support and therapeutic services had to be delivered online, whilst emergency accommodation (traditional communal refuge provision) was drastically restricted due to the need to isolate and prevent the spread of infection.
2.02	Since the lifting of restrictions, all services across the region have seen a significant rise in demand, with Flintshire services (including Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA's), floating support, outreach provision, refuge and support for children and young people), seeing an increase in referrals of between 40% and 50%. At present there is no indication that this trend is slowing down.
2.03	A worrying trend that has been highlighted as part of the needs assessment process has been the rise in children and young people accessing support for their experiences of domestic abuse and sexual violence. This is often within the family home, but there is a significant rise in those experiencing abuse within their own peer relationships. Local specialist support providers

	in Flintshire have seen significant increases in demand for the services of their Children's Workers.
2.04	<p>Welsh Government funding is made available each year to support the services referenced above. It is received on behalf of the region by the North Wales Police and Crime Commissioner and allocated by the regional Joint Commissioning Board. At present the funding is allocated to the following services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional VAWDASV Team (hosted by Flintshire County Council) • Regional Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) provision • Regional Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) provision • Specialist Children's workers in some local providers, including Clwyd Alyn Women's Aid (CAWA) and Domestic Abuse Safety Unit (DASU) in Flintshire • Behaviour change intervention for perpetrators of domestic violence. • Community Advocate for Black, Asian and Minority and Ethnic (BAME) victims of VAWDASV • Schools' intervention focussed on consent, toxic masculinity and misogyny.
2.05	Flintshire County Council works closely with the specialist sector, to ensure victims and survivors of VAWDASV can obtain short term, emergency support (such as accommodation), as well as longer term support to recover from trauma.
2.06	The Housing Support Grant is utilised to provide support within refuge (either the more traditional communal provision, or disbursed accommodation, which is individual flats/houses, with additional support attached). This has recently been re-commissioned and divided between two local providers (CAWA and DASU), to ensure that victims and their children have the greatest possible choice. This funding also covers outreach and floating support in order to help families access the support they need after leaving their emergency accommodation and settling into their long-term homes. Service providers strive to ensure victims and children remain in their homes and the perpetrator is moved out, but this is not always possible, especially when they need emergency safeguarding support.
2.07	Social Services also play an important role in working alongside the specialist sector, to protect the children and ensure appropriate safeguarding remains in place whilst the family are settled into emergency accommodation. They remain the driving force behind the safeguarding package, enabling specialist provision to be offered, while ensuring all partners are working together to support the family to thrive.

3.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
3.01	The cost of implementing the North Wales VAWDASV Strategy and Delivery Plan is met through the Welsh Government Regional VAWDASV Grant, as well as funding from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Local Authorities of the region.

4.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	The North Wales Vulnerability and Exploitation Strategy and Delivery Plan has a continually updated Risk Register which is managed by the Regional Vulnerability and Exploitation Board.

5.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
5.01	None required for the purposes of this report.

6.00	APPENDICES
6.01	1) North Wales Vulnerability and Exploitation Delivery Plan 2022-2023 2) Exploitation and Delivery Plan

7.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
7.01	None

8.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
8.01	Contact Officer: Rhiannon Edwards, North Wales VAWDASV Advisor Telephone: 01352 702647 E-mail: Rhiannon.edwards@flintshire.gov.uk

9.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
9.01	<p>Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) - A specialist professional who works with victims of domestic. IDVAs can help victims with everything from safety planning, navigating the criminal justice system, accessing other services, and representing their voice at a MARAC (Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference).</p> <p>Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) – A specialist professional n who provides support to people who have experienced sexual violence. The support they offer is tailored around the needs of the individual.</p> <p>National Training Framework (NTF) - The NTF is a statutory training framework introduced by Welsh Government for implementation by the ‘responsible authorities’ as referenced in the 2015 Act.</p>

