

Meeting: Overview and Scrutiny Board **Date:** 6 November 2024

Wards affected: ALL

Report Title: Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy Delivery Update

When does the decision need to be implemented? n/a

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Board with an update on progress against the Council's Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy delivery plan.

2. Background

- 2.1 The DASV Strategy "Breaking the Chain" was approved in March 2023. Delivery is overseen by the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group (DASVEG), a multi-agency partnership including representatives from the Community Safety Partnership, Devon and Cornwall Police, Probation, NHS Devon, Adults and Children's Services, and domestic abuse and sexual violence service providers. The DASVEG reports into the Community Safety Partnership Board and also links across to the TSCP Board.
- 2.2 The Strategy Delivery Plan was approved by DASVEG in May 2024.
- 2.3 The statutory Safe Accommodation Strategy as required by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 sits beneath the DASV Strategy. Progress on this will be reported to Overview and Scrutiny Board in January 2025.

3. Summary of Progress 2023 to date

- 3.1 The significant number of recommendations from the original strategic review and feedback from stakeholders have been synthesized into a more manageable plan. The Plan reflects the ultimate aim of cultural change that is required to meet the objectives of the Strategy

and is themed to allow actions that meet more than one of the Strategy's 5 key pillars to be grouped together more coherently.

- 3.2 The 5 Pillars are Embedding Lived Experience, Prevention, Identification, Disrupt, and Data and Understanding.
- 3.3 There has been no lived experience engagement in finalising the Delivery Plan and this has been a key area of work to progress. Using monies from the Domestic Abuse New Burdens fund, peer researchers have been commissioned and engagement facilitation grants have been awarded to two voluntary sector providers, enabling safe grass roots engagement with people experiencing domestic abuse and sexual violence by organisations they are already in contact with and trust. Training is being provided to support skills development for VCS staff where needed.
- 3.4 The DASVEG agreed three priority areas for specific focus: Communications, Workforce Development and Disruption. Three workstreams have been mobilised with identified leads and cross agency representation to undertake activities against defined objectives as set out in the overall Plan:

Communications	To develop a communications plan that raises awareness and also educates people about domestic abuse and sexual violence in the context of relationships; and ensures victims and survivors know where to get support and trust that they will be believed.
Workforce Development	To review the range of learning offers available, content and format. To identify, test solutions and make recommendations to address the challenges the system is experiencing in maximising uptake of learning offers.
Disruption	To focus on ways to identify and disrupt the person causing harm as early as possible. This includes prevention and initiatives in communities (including in the Night Time Economy) as well as seeking resources to put in place sustainable behaviour change interventions that are currently not available due to a lack of funding.

- 3.5 The Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) Steering Group has led on the actions arising from the MARAC review that was undertaken at the same time as the strategic review:
- A new MARAC Operating Protocol has been agreed across Torbay and the wider Peninsula Authorities
 - Audit of skills and training completed to ensure staff attending MARAC have received training in risk identification and can make appropriate referrals to MARAC
 - Core agency attendance at MARAC has improved and a process is in place to flag and escalate non -attendance
 - Rolling programme of training in place for new MARAC representatives

- An updated Information Sharing Agreement is in the final stages of preparation. This will enable achievement of one outstanding recommendation concerning an audit to understand the high volume of repeat cases to MARAC.

3.6 Other achievements:

- Mapping of Children's Services engagement activities and opportunities
- Continuation of Health Domestic Violence Advocate role in Torbay Hospital
- Improved MARAC data dashboard
- Improved governance around sharing learnings from Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs- now called Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews or DARDRs) via DASVEG
- With Torbay Public Health, supporting a Devon wide Domestic Abuse and Suicide Prevention conference in November 2024
- Ensuring front line domestic abuse and sexual violence practitioners are skilled in trauma informed practice, and rollout of trauma stabilisation training
- Supporting development of Sexual Violence Ambassadors in Devon Rape Crisis service
- Progressing plans for implementation of a new case management system to improve data sharing in the Growth in Action Alliance which includes the domestic abuse service, homeless hostel and adult treatment service.
- Refresh of the Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment (to report in January 2025)

4. Challenges ahead

- 4.1 A number of important initiatives that support the system response to domestic abuse and sexual violence in Torbay were established through grant funding provided by the previous Government over the last three years and which end in March 2025. These include:
- a) Funding for various VCS organisations including the Standing Tall Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership and Devon Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Services (DRCSAS) which will significantly reduce capacity in the system if withdrawn or reduced.
 - b) DRCSAS has formally written to the Council outlining its financial situation and the impacts on victims and survivors of sexual violence in Torbay. As the only dedicated provider of sexual violence services in Torbay and with existing high and unmet demand, reductions in funding have a consequential and dire impact on our ability to meet the objectives we have set in our Strategy around improving and elevating the system response to sexual violence.

- c) Court Independent Domestic Violence Advocate – based in Torbay Domestic Abuse Service this role supports victims to sustain engagement in criminal justice processes which can take prolonged periods of time, with significant success.
- d) Safer Rainbow Service – provided by The Intercom Trust, Torbay manages the Devon wide LGBTQ+ domestic abuse and sexual violence advocacy service, providing a specialist response to LGBTQ+ victims and survivors.
- e) Charitable funds such as the National Lottery are also oversubscribed and are changing or restricting their grant criteria which is limiting the availability of alternative sources of funding for our VCS partners.

4.2 These and other risks are held on a risk register that is monitored by DASVEG. The full impacts will not be known until after the Government has announced its departmental spending allocations and these have been confirmed to the Council and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.