

Committee: Police	Date: 23 rd September 2013
Subject: Responding to Incidents of Domestic Abuse	Public
Report of: Town Clerk and Commissioner of Police (Pol 41/13)	For Information

Summary

This report is in direct response to the Chairman's request about the mechanisms in place to respond to incidents of domestic abuse. It provides an overview of the work currently being undertaken by both the PPU and the SCP and how they are working in partnership to deliver their priorities.

The Force has a dedicated resource of 12 staff in the form of the Public Protection Unit (PPU) to investigate domestic abuse and other crimes including rape and serious sexual offences, missing persons, child protection and hate crime. The Unit is based at Bishopsgate Police Station, which includes the Phoenix Suite which is a specialist suite made suitable to take vulnerable victims. The Unit has recently moved to a new shift pattern to provide on- site cover seven days a week. The Officers are qualified detectives and undertake enhanced training in particular specialisms, such as domestic abuse (DA). The Unit work closely with other partner agencies and the City of London's Safer City Partnership (SCP).

The volume of domestic abuse incidents in the City of London is comparatively low compared to other London Boroughs owing to the demographic. There are also other complexities in reporting such as crimes being reported to the City of London Police that have not taken place in the City and those reporting not being resident in the City. There is no particular trend identified over the last 3 years, however partner agencies are committed to encouraging reporting of this type of crime as it has historically been under reported. A tool kit has been circulated to 500 City businesses to encourage employers and employees to recognise and report incidents.

The Force works with the SCP to manage the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) to which all cases of DA are

referred. The Force operates a positive arrest policy for DA offences. The main priority is to assess the risk to the individual and any children involved reduce any further harm occurring. The PPU operate a number of special schemes such as installing hardware and panic alarms to reduce and manage risks to victims.

Work is continuing to improve services to victims in a number of ways including the current project to work with Hotels in the City to raise awareness of their premises in terms of crimes taking place and the SCP is leading on a Hotel Forum aided by the PPU to promote this area of work.

Members should hopefully be reassured that victims of DA receive an excellent service in the City of London.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members note the contents of this report.

Main Report

Background

1. At your May Committee, in response to a question from the Chairman regarding the police response to domestic abuse, the Commissioner undertook to bring a report to your Committee. At the further request of the Chairman, it was agreed that the report would be a joint report of the Commissioner of Police and the Town Clerk (Safer City Partnership).
2. The City of London Police, Public Protection Unit (PPU) is a Unit within the Force's Crime Directorate. The Unit has been in existence for a number of years with a remit to deal with child protection, missing person enquiries, domestic abuse, rape and other serious sexual offences, hate crime, management of sex offenders in the community and vulnerable adults. As a result of the introduction of the ACPO Protective Service Minimum Standards¹, the capacity of the unit was increased in 2009-10. Since this time, the PPU has been developing a strategic response to domestic abuse incidents with the aim of providing the best possible support and care to sufferers.

¹ The ACPO Protective Service Minimum Standards were a set of standards introduced by ACPO to ensure that Forces were able to provide the necessary capacity and capability in ten key areas of policing- Protecting Vulnerable People being one of those areas- this has now been taken forward as part of the Strategic Policing Requirement.

The Force Public Protection Unit

3. The Unit comprises 12 staff including a Detective Inspector, two Detective Sergeants and nine Detective Constables.
4. In terms of enhancing resourcing in this area of business, the Detective Inspector PPU recently submitted a business case for the consideration of Safer City Partnership (SCP) funding for a Vulnerable Victims Advocate for the City of London. The advocate's role would be versatile and tailored to the needs of the City and provide both a service to vulnerable victims of PPU related crime as well as engage with the community, run advice surgeries and undertake project/promotional work around domestic abuse, sexual violence, hate crime and sexual exploitation. This project is currently in the very early stages and is subject to further research. Early discussions have taken place with the Assistant Director of Victim Support for London and other domestic abuse charities who, along with the SCP are fully supportive of this concept.
5. The Unit recently moved to a new shift pattern covering seven days a week. This has resulted in the force being able to offer enhanced specialist services to the City of London. The Unit covers all the crime areas aforementioned in paragraph 2 and all PPU officers are accredited detectives having completed the initial foundation course. Once completed, officers undertake further specialist training to enhance their skill set for example officers attend a week long domestic abuse course which raises their awareness around risk management and focuses in on the victims of domestic crime. The majority of the officers are also trained in 'Achieving Best Evidence' (ABE) interviewing in order to support both vulnerable adults and children in visually recorded interviews.
6. Further to their role as specialist investigators, each staff member is allocated a specific area of responsibility. This process helps create subject matter experts, an example can be found in the honour based violence (HBV) strand. The officer responsible will attend conferences, forge links with HBV charities and the officer currently with this responsibility is in the planning stages of working with an HBV community worker from neighbouring Hackney and the Mansell Street community, in order to raise awareness in this area amongst the community.
7. In addition to the specialist dedicated staff based in the PPU the Force has invested a further £23,000 in 2013 recruiting five more SOIT officers (Sexual Offences Investigative Trained). These officers offer support to victims of serious sexual assault from the point of reporting right through to, and beyond the court process. This investment will further enhance the cadre of officers of up to fifteen who collectively provide 24/7 on call

cover. Further to this The DI PPU and a Detective Constable in the unit have trained 60 officers throughout the Force over the last two years to act as first responders to rape (FRR). These officers are trained to offer immediate reassurance to victims of this crime type whilst waiting for the arrival of the SOIT. All FRR are recruited having first demonstrated excellent victim care.

8. In terms of accommodation, the Unit occupies office space at Bishopsgate Police Station and there is also a victim suite at Bishopsgate known as the Phoenix Suite, which has been appropriately resourced to provide bespoke accommodation to which vulnerable victims can be taken in order to ensure evidence is preserved and the victim feels reassured and safe.
9. The Unit works closely with partners including the Children's Social Care Department, National Centre for Domestic Violence, Broken Rainbow², Corporate Alliance Against Domestic Violence (CAADV) and victim support services as well as the Safer City Partnership (SCP).

Current Position in relation to Domestic Abuse

10. In the context of the City of London the actual volume of domestic abuse incidents is relatively low in comparison to surrounding London boroughs. This is mainly due to the demographic of the City of London. There are also additional complexities in terms of reporting, as some incidents that are reported to the City of London Police do not actually take place in the City and/ or where the victim is not a resident in the City of London. Nevertheless, as this is a high risk area of policing in terms of the harm that can be caused to the victim, the City of London Police ensure that the appropriate action is taken initially and then pass any investigation on to the appropriate Force/ agency. Data for the last 3 years is shown in the table below and is shown from August to August. This identifies no particular trends.

² <http://www.brokenrainbow.org.uk/> - this is the National Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Domestic Violence Helpline

Year/ date	Total No. Incidents reported	City resident
24/08/2010-23/08/2011	91	13
24/08/2011–23/08/2012	105*	21
24/08/2012-23/08/2013	86	18

*Taking this year as a typical year, in terms of disposals: 10 offenders were given cautions.

15 were charged with various offences including: 2 for breach of non molestation orders; 4 for assault occasioning ABH; 6 for common assault and battery; 1 for inflicting GBH without intent; 1 for rape; 1 for harassment. Court disposals: 7 were found guilty, 1 not guilty, 2 cases were dismissed and 5 are pending.

11. One of the agreed priorities for the SCP is taking action against domestic abuse and violence against women and girls. As part of the Domestic Abuse Forum's Action Plan for 2013/14, both the PPU and the SCP have been working in partnership to prevent violence from happening, and taking action to reduce the risk to women and girls. The PPU are currently introducing new working practices to address concerns where children are being sexually exploited. This will be launched in October through multi agency training events and forms part of a national ACPO action plan.
12. A collaborative approach has been taken with the Force to ensure the continuity of the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). This is chaired by the PPU Detective Inspector and co-ordinated by SCP Administrator, and attended by core agencies who meet to address what actions need to be taken to ensure the safety of victims of domestic abuse. Unlike most other force areas MARAC is convened in the City as soon after a referral is received, this ensures that the agencies are able to address the victims risk as soon as possible.
13. The PPU and SCP undertook CAADV multi-agency risk assessment training in June, which covered managing victims risk and the MARAC process. The Unit's staff have also reached out to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community through the introduction of LGBT liaison officers in order to open up channels of communication, increase confidence and identify any under reporting.
14. A domestic violence toolkit was launched last year which saw 500 Human Resources Domestic Violence toolkits being circulated to businesses across the City of London. This toolkit is designed to encourage reporting and provide details of the support that is available to actual and potential victims who perhaps do not realise that what they are experiencing is a form of domestic abuse as this is not always physical abuse. This project

received the full support of Baroness Scotland who visited the City to launch the project.

15. The City of London Police operates a positive arrest policy for domestic abuse offences. This ensures that a positive message is sent out to perpetrators and ensures the victim is given important time away from the assailant to discuss options and assess risk. The Force also records incidents that have fallen short of being a criminal offence. This assists in building up 'bad character' evidence against perpetrators which may assist to support future criminal complaints. The PPU is committed to ensuring that all victims are provided with the very best level of service and are dealt with positively and promptly without prejudice and in confidence.
16. When an incident is reported, the PPU's first priority is to protect the victim and any children involved from injury or further harm. If the situation is an emergency, a police officer will attend and deal with the incident appropriately which could result in the arrest of the perpetrator and will also take necessary action to protect the victim from further abuse.
17. In many cases victims of domestic abuse may require temporary or longer term housing alternatives. They may also require an injunction to prevent the perpetrator approaching the victim and may need counseling or support. The PPU, which records all cases of domestic abuse, provides a high level of care to the victim. Offering support and reassurance and helping them to access other agencies as well as arranging transport to a safe place.
18. The PPU also operates a number of special schemes such as, target hardening (installing security hardware at victim addresses), address/occurrence markers and panic alarms. The City's Sanctuary Scheme provides target hardening to all victims of abuse within 24 hours in urgent cases. This can include panic rooms, bars on windows and extra locks. The PPU has been working with Thames Valley Partnership on the introduction of TecSOS (technical SOS phones) mobile phones. The phone operates as a panic alarm for victims of high risk domestic violence and provides police with an approximate area where the phone is being activated. The PPU staff are trained in the use of the device before it is given out to potential victims.
19. The PPU's specialist suite at Bishopsgate Police Station (the Phoenix Suite) was created to offer victims a comforting environment whilst investigations are carried out. The SCP has offered financial assistance to improve the appearance of the rear lobby and arrangements are currently underway to carry out this work.

20. The Unit's focus on victim safety and management of the perpetrator involves an additional and important resource which is represented by MARAC. The SCP is responsible for coordinating a MARAC referral so that the PPU can liaise with a range of agencies, ensuring that an effective safety plan for the victim is implemented. It is the cases of the highest risk of domestic abuse that are discussed at MARAC and this is determined by the completion of a DASH (Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment) risk assessment. The City of London PPU was one of the first in the UK to operate the DASH model and to incorporate it into the domestic abuse booklet which had been designed to create a one stop shop for victims. The DASH provides officers with the tools to effectively identify and manage risk from the onset.
21. The PPU will be developing DA tool kits for all staff to use when investigating DA out of hours. This will be a simpler version of our current standard operating procedures and act as a template for officers when investigating reports of domestic abuse. This will ensure that officer follow protocol and are aware of all the tools available to them in managing risk.
22. The PPU's specially trained officers will carry out research and with the assistance of the violent crime desk within FIB will complete full intelligence packages. Where a duty to exchange information exists PPU will share this information with partner agencies in order to successfully manage a risk i.e in cases such as those involving children or young persons. The PPU has close links with the Children's Social Care Department and are members of both the Executive and Local Children Safeguarding Boards.
23. Early intervention and reaching out to victims who do not report domestic abuse is also integral to the work of the PPU. To this end, the PPU and SCP have been engaging with hotels in the City of London and are developing a 'hotel toolkit' for front line staff to help promote awareness and provide advice about domestic abuse and sexual violence. The PPU completed a presentation to the Grange Hotel in St Pauls in 2012 but have found it difficult to get the hotels to buy into this. SCP are assisting with encouraging hotels to participate and together are planning to run a series of presentations to all the hotels in the City of London to raise awareness of sexual offences, domestic violence and child sexual exploitation as there have been a number of offences which have taken place in the City hotels in the last 12 months. Information from the PPU will be included in the toolkit. SCP is leading on an event in conjunction with the PPU, to promote the toolkit at - the *Hotel Forum*- which is scheduled to take place on 2nd October in the City Marketing Suite.

24. The DI PPU recently sought advice from the Independent Advisory Group (IAG) to look at ways of improving awareness of the PPU in the community. Work is currently underway to promote the PPU and the support it can give to any individual living or working in the City who is suffering from domestic abuse. The Force's Corporate Communications Dept is involved in and progressing this project.

Conclusion

25. The PPU and SCP are working together in partnership to further improve and develop services in the City for victims of domestic abuse. It is recognised that with the help of other partner agencies, victims of domestic abuse who live or work in the City of London should be encouraged to report their suffering knowing that they will receive the best possible care and advice.

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