

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>
Safer City Partnership	26 February 2019
<b>Subject:</b> Domestic Abuse, Vulnerability and Risk Policy Update	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Domestic Abuse, Vulnerability and Risk Policy Officer	<b>For Information</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Summary</b></p> <p>This report updates Members on the activities of the one-year funded post of the Domestic Abuse, Vulnerability and Risk Policy Officer.</p> <p><b>Recommendation(s)</b></p> <p>Members are asked to note the report.</p>	

## Key Points

- Outline of the funding and role of the new post.
- Key areas the post holder has focussed on since starting the role.
- Areas of good practice around domestic abuse within the City of London.
- Areas for improvement around domestic abuse within the City of London.
- A deadline for the full recommendations paper.
- References

## Outline of the Funding and Role of the New Post

1. The post of Domestic Abuse, Vulnerability and Risk Policy Officer started at the beginning of December 2018. The role is funded for one-year as a part time post of 3 days per week by the Town Clerk's, DCCS and the City of London Police. The person who has been recruited to undertake this work has considerable experience working as the Vulnerable Victims Advocate delivering frontline support to victims of domestic abuse (DA) and sexual violence.
2. The role of the DA, Vulnerability and Risk Policy Officer is to look at DA within the City of London, making recommendations as to how the City can improve

the response and services offered to people who have experienced DA. Which in turn will work towards ensuring we are able to contribute to a flourishing society by helping people to feel safe. The post holder will do this by engaging with other boroughs to explore what projects and services are working well and consider how we can incorporate elements of these existing good practice within the City of London.

3. The post holder will engage with service providers, the local community and businesses within the City of London to ensure their voice is heard within the recommendations that will be made.
4. When looking at the response and services for DA within the City of London it is important that we ensure services engage people who live, learn, work and visit here. It is estimated that 75% of people experiencing DA are targeted at work, indicating that employers are in a unique position to create a supportive workplace culture. With the right tools and knowledge employers can create a place of safety for people experiencing DA, promote the importance of 'health and wellbeing and help break the silence around this issue' (Gov.uk). With the population of workers within the City of London estimated at 450,000 people, the workplace is a key area that we must focus on when looking at DA within the City, which in turn will help work towards supporting a thriving economy.
5. Whilst in post the person recruited will be able to provide specialist support around DA and sexual violence to professionals. When first coming into post the policy officer started with a scoping exercise of DA within the City of London, whilst reaching out to other London boroughs in order to ensure the City of London's policies and protocols are in line with policies and protocols pan-London.

#### **Key Areas identified:**

6. Since December 2018, the post holder has focussed on the following key areas:
  - i. Engaging and meeting with Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) leads in Islington, Tower Hamlets, Havering, Southwark and Hackney. The discussions had with the VAWG leads in these boroughs have evidenced that VAWG mostly sits within the Community Safety Team in other local authorities and it indicated the importance of having a VAWG lead. The Mayor of London having recently published 'The London Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2018-2021', it is evident that VAWG is a national priority and an issue that we must continue to address within the City of London. At present we do not have a VAWG lead within the City of London, this is an area that needs consideration for improvement which the DA, Vulnerability and Risk Policy Officer will explore further whilst in post.
  - ii. Engaging with the business community is essential in the response to DA within the City. With such a high number of workers entering the City every day for work, it is crucial to involve employers, HR, health and wellbeing leads

in the conversation around DA. The post holder has been working alongside the City of London's Public Health department to host a roundtable discussion on DA with representatives from different businesses. The post holder will reach businesses through promotional work to the Business in the Community, who have an aim to support the health and wellbeing of employees with a focus on domestic abuse. The aim of the roundtable is to ensure the voice of businesses is captured in the discussion around this issue so we can provide businesses with the skills and knowledge to support employees who are experiencing DA.

- iii. The post holder has started the process of collating data on DA from different agencies that are providing support/services within the City. They are using the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (DA/SV) Forum as a platform to engage service providers to collect and share data sets of DA within the City. The data analysis will be essential to the work of the post holder to focus on any trends or gaps in services and training to professionals delivering services within the City. This data will be used to guide the recommendations that the post holder will make.
- iv. The post holder has been engaging with the City of London housing estates around their responsibility for City residents experiencing DA. They have been working with the City of London Head of Housing Management and the Tenancy and Wellbeing Officer to implement DA training to all staff and managers working on the City of London housing estates. This will be embedded within their compulsory training programme and will be driven alongside the resident's DA policy which has already been published.
- v. The post holder has been working alongside the City of London Head of Housing Management to achieve the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation. When the City of London achieve accreditation, it will be recognised as a borough committed to tackling DA and working in line with 'The London Tackling VAWG Strategy 2018-2021' and the recently published 'Transforming the Response to Domestic Abuse- the Draft Domestic Abuse Bill'.
- vi. As well as achieving the DAHA accreditation, the City of London have committed to sign the Pledge 'Make a Stand' which has been developed by the Chartered Institute for Housing in partnership with the DAHA. The purpose of the Pledge is to encourage the housing sector to take responsibility and ownership to tackle DA. The post holder is working alongside partners within the City to achieve and deliver the four commitments set out within the Pledge. These commitments must be achieved by September 2019.
- vii. The post holder has been reviewing the DA/SV Forum membership to ensure that the forum has representation from agencies across the borough and to encourage partnership working. The forum provides a space for agencies to

share good practice and projects/funding they are involved in. The forum is key in driving VAWG within the City of London at a strategic level and ensuring all agencies are working together to tackle this issue.

7. The post holder is facilitating a training day which will be delivered by Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS). The training day is free as LAWRS have been commissioned by MOPAC to deliver training on VAWG and harmful practices in each borough. The training will be delivered in March at the Barbican and has had a positive response from professionals working with service users in the City. Those who have signed up for the training day are from a variety of services, all working with people who may come across VAWG and/or harmful practices. This training would not have been utilised if there had been no one in post leading on DA to facilitate the training.

#### **Areas of Good Practice Around Domestic Abuse Within the City of London:**

8. It is evident from the post holder's work to date that there are several good practices that the City of London already achieve to tackle DA. These include:
  - i. Good partnership working between agencies. This includes the City of London Police, different departments within the City of London Corporation such as the Community Safety Team, DCCS and Public Health, and the voluntary sector amongst others.
  - ii. A Vulnerable Victims Advocate co-located within the City of London police.
  - iii. Training courses delivered by the City and Hackney Children's Safeguarding Board that are accessible to professionals within the City.
  - iv. A DA policy for City of London tenants.
  - v. A DA policy for Corporation staff.
  - vi. A Sanctuary Scheme.
  - vii. The well-embedded DA/SV forum and regular attendance from current members.
  - viii. A Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).

#### **Areas for Improvement Around Domestic Abuse Within the City of London:**

9. It is also evident from the post holder's work to date that there are several areas identified that need improving:
  - i. It has been identified that whilst there is training available for staff within the City of London, there are still gaps with the variety of courses available to staff and issues with accessibility. There are regularly free training courses offered by other organisations and funding available to deliver training within the City of London. However, without a person leading on VAWG and/or DA training opportunities are being missed and professionals within the City are not having access to the same training as those in other boroughs. This is evident through the VAWG and harmful practices training day that the post holder has facilitated in partnership with LAWRS.

- ii. The post holder has identified that there are issues with data collection of VAWG and DA within the City of London. At present it is difficult to have an in-depth understanding of the types of VAWG we are seeing in the City. The City of London Police collect data around the crimes that have been reported, however we have limited data for crimes that have been reported in different areas where the victim may work in the City, or limited data for crimes that have not been reported at all. The post holder has identified that this piece of work needs consideration through the DA/SV Forum for all partner agencies to discuss the most effective way of capturing this.
- iii. The post holder has identified a gap in the engagement from healthcare services within the City of London. As there is only one GP practice within the City of London, residents are registered with GP practices outside of the City. Health services that border the City, such as GP's, hospitals, sexual health clinics etc need to be aware of the services offered within the City so they can refer service users to the correct service. There is also work that needs to be done to engage private healthcare services within the City of London. We know that many people who work in the City access healthcare services close to work for convenience and time efficiency. The organisation Safelives have completed a recent study finding that 83% of people experiencing DA who have mental health needs were more likely to have visited their GP or A&E before accessing support for the abuse ([Safelives.org.uk](https://www.safelives.org.uk)). This indicates that this is an area to potentially engage and support a high number of people experiencing VAWG/DA and help to keep them safe from harm.
- iv. The post holder has identified that there is a need for further engagement work with businesses within the City of London. As has been stated within this report DA in the workplace is a significant problem and a crucial time for the victim to receive support. Work has already been done to engage businesses within the City of London through a joint campaign by the City of London Police, Victim Support and Safer City Partnership which launched in the summer 2018 called 'Spotting the Signs'. This campaign was aimed at encouraging businesses to have the right tools and knowledge to support employees experiencing DA. This was an excellent piece of partnership work to engage businesses, however more work needs to be done in this area to ensure businesses are supported to keep people safe whilst at work in the City.
- v. Whilst the City of London has a low number of residents compared to other boroughs, the number of high-risk DA cases referred into the MARAC is below the number estimated by SafeLives, who provide guidance on MARACs nationally. SafeLives estimate that the City of London MARAC should receive 10 cases per year, at present the City of London MARAC received 5 cases in 2018. This indicates a need for promotional work and training to professionals about the City of London MARAC. Training and awareness are needed for partner agencies to ensure they know when and how to refer into the City of London MARAC. This is extremely important to ensure high risk victims of DA who live within the City of London are receiving the right support in order to keep them safe.

- vi. At present the City of London does not have an up to date VAWG Strategy. The post holder will be working alongside the City of London Public Health to develop a joint VAWG Strategy with Hackney. As the City of London and Hackney have a joint Safeguarding Board, implementing a joint VAWG Strategy will be a positive way to develop and encourage partnership working between both boroughs. To ensure that the strategy is specific to the City of London, we will develop a unique action plan which will be delivered through the DA/SV Forum.
- vii. There is currently no single point of contact for VAWG or DA within the City of London. Whilst there is a considerable amount of good work being practiced within the City of London in terms of DA, further work needs to be developed on DA and the wider VAWG issues. This is to ensure that the City of London is a safe place for all those who live, learn, work and visit here. This would also lead towards the City of London working in line with 'The London Tackling VAWG Strategy 2018-2021'.

**Deadline for Full Recommendations Paper:**

- 10. Within this paper the post holder has indicated some of the work they have been focussing on since starting the role in December 2018. The post holder is continuing to develop this work and explore what the City of London needs to improve and enhance the response to VAWG. The post holder will be presenting a recommendations paper by 23rd September 2019 for discussion and review.

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