

<b>Committee(s)</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Safeguarding Sub Committee	26012017
<b>Subject:</b> Safeguarding Children from the Experience of Domestic Abuse	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Community and Children's Services	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Rachel Green, Service Manager, Children's Social Care and Early Help	

### Summary

The purpose of this report is to set out the current response to protecting and meeting the needs of children who experience domestic abuse, and our future plans to strengthen our response and improve children's wellbeing.

Our current response includes specialist social work provision, therapeutic support and strong links with the voluntary sector organisations. This works extremely well, and we aim to build on an excellent standard of practice by developing in house tools to support children, and to strengthen the opportunities to talk with a trusted adult.

Planned future work includes extra-curricular activities for children who live in a household with features of domestic abuse, such as sport, music and art. The purpose is to give children a safe place to play and explore, build confidence, alleviate tension, and an opportunity to build positive relationships.

The Safeguarding Children from the experience of Domestic Abuse report is attached at Appendix 1.

### Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

### Main Report

The City of London Corporation has a comprehensive Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy, with accompanying action plan.

The report notes that no child, whether unborn or of any age, is unaffected by domestic abuse. Younger children, for example, may have tummy aches, wet the bed, struggle to sleep and have temper tantrums. Boys may be violent and copy the behaviour at home. Older boys may start to miss school and abuse alcohol and drugs. Girls may start cutting themselves, have an eating disorder or take overdoses.

Girls are at risk of having an abusive partner themselves. There is a link between domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation.

Children experience domestic abuse across social class and financial status. It is not less prevalent in wealthy family environments, and certainly not less prevalent in the City of London.

- 67% of formal assessments undertaken in 2015/16 by social workers in the City of London identified domestic abuse as a factor. These included children who are schooled in the independent sector and those who attend state schools.
- Domestic abuse is a factor in over half of serious case reviews.
- One in five teenage children experience abuse from their boyfriend or girlfriend.

Our Early Help worker, who is a qualified social worker, is able to signpost families to specialist community services, and is able to offer early identification and prevention opportunities. All social workers are trained to offer assessment and support to families experiencing domestic violence. In the City of London, staff are offered additional training, and a part-time specialist domestic abuse senior social worker is in post to ensure a robust and comprehensive service to families. For extremely high-risk situations, consideration is given to spot purchasing perpetrator risk assessments and interventions, and vulnerability assessments.

The Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Forum – comprising members of the Children's Social Care and Early Help Service, the Public Protection Unit, the Community Safety Team, City Advice and specialist voluntary sector VAWG agencies – has helped shape the development of our services for children experiencing domestic violence.

Recommendations, among others, include providing safe ways for children to speak about the abuse within the home, strengthening positive activities outside of the home for children, making best use of voluntary sector provision, and activities for adult victims (with or without their children) to build self-esteem and confidence.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Safeguarding Children from the experience of Domestic Abuse
- Appendix 2 – Governance Structure

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