

Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 6 September 2018

Present:

Councillor Hacking (Chair) – in the Chair
Councillors M Dar, Fletcher-Hackwood, Rawlins and Rawson

Also present:

Councillors S Murphy - Deputy Leader

Michaela Turner - Designated Safeguarding Lead, Abraham Moss School
DCI Rebecca Boyce - Greater Manchester Police

Apologies: Councillor Andrews, Cooley, Evans and Kirkpatrick

CESC/18/34 Minutes

Decisions

1. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2018 as a correct record.
2. To note the minutes of the Our Manchester Voluntary and Community Sector Fund Task and Finish Group meeting held 12 July 2018.

CESC/18/35 Domestic Violence and Abuse - Update

The Committee received a report of the Chief Operating Officer (Neighbourhoods) which provided Members with a progress update on the implementation of the Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy 2016 – 2020.

Officers referred to the main points and themes within the report, which included:

- Providing a background to the report following the ‘Delivering Differently – Manchester’s Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy’ that was launched on the 17 June 2016;
- A description of achievements and developments over the previous twelve months, including initiatives that focused on the impact of domestic violence and abuse on children and young people;
- A description of the activities undertaken with a range of partners around the five work streams of: preventing abuse; managing safety; supporting people to seek help; adapting delivery models in response to changing needs and demands; training and developing the workforce;
- The impact of domestic abuse on children and young people;
- Funding and commissioning arrangements; and
- Information on the conduct of domestic homicide reviews.

Some of the key points that arose from the Committee's discussions were:

- What training had been provided to staff working in schools in relation to Operation Encompass;
- How did Operation Encompass support those children not in mainstream education;
- Members commented that the report lacked any figures in the report and asked how many referrals had been made as a result of Operation Encompass;
- What work was being done through schools to promote healthy relationships;
- What activities were being undertaken to address coercive behaviours, such as financial and emotional abuse and what support was provided for children who were affected by this;
- Further information on Domestic Homicide Reviews was sought;
- What organisations were involved with the Domestic Violence Forum and how did this work fit in with the Greater Manchester Mayor's Policing and Crime Plan;
- Further information was sought on the Bridging to Change programme, designed to address perpetrators' behaviour;
- What work was being done to tackle Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and so-called 'Honour Based' Violence; and
- How were the outcomes and success of these interventions and actions measured?

The Domestic Violence Manager informed the Committee that the Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy had been co-produced with a range of partners, including the Voluntary and Community Sector, and the Domestic Violence Forum, chaired by the Deputy Leader which comprised of 34 members, including statutory organisations, Greater Manchester Police (GMP), the Probation Service, Health partners and the Voluntary and Community Sector. She said that the Domestic Violence Forum was collectively responsible for delivering the strategy and they had an agreed action plan.

DCI Boyce informed the Committee that Operation Encompass provided an overnight referral to the relevant school to notify them if a child had been present when police had attended an incident of domestic violence. This overnight referral made it possible for schools to provide the most appropriate pastoral care to the child. She said that training had been delivered to GMP staff and this continued to be refreshed to ensure good and consistent practice and recording was embedded. She said that it was planned that this be rolled out across Greater Manchester. She further informed the Committee that each school had been provided with guidance regarding Operation Encompass; however, it was recognised that each school had its own arrangements to deliver pastoral care to their pupils so the guidance was not prescriptive. In response to a request for the number of referrals made, the Committee was advised that this would be circulated. The Committee was informed that the scheme operated across all wards and across borders for those children attending schools in other Authorities.

DCI Boyce informed the Committee that Operation Encompass included referrals to non-mainstream places of education, for example Pupil Referral Units, and if a child

attended an early years provision, such as a nursery, the Manchester Safeguarding Unit would be advised of the referral so that appropriate action could be taken. Michaela Turner said that her school did become aware of children affected by coercive forms of abuse within a family that would not necessarily result in GMP attending a property and making a referral. She said this information was usually obtained through informal interactions with family members. She said the school would still respond appropriately to the child concerned. She said that the school also promoted and raised awareness around the subject of healthy relationships via a range of activities within the school.

In response to the question regarding training of front line staff, the Community Safety Lead said this training was available to all staff of partner organisations, including the voluntary sector. She said that the training was regularly reviewed. In addition she said that there were regular campaigns to raise awareness of the issue of domestic violence. In response to the comment made regarding the measuring of outcomes, the Community Safety Lead said this was being reviewed to effectively measure the impact of these activities.

In response to the discussion around the issue of coercive behaviour and abuse, the Domestic Violence Manager said that it was recognised as a form of abuse and work was underway to tackle this. She reported that training had been delivered to staff working in banks to help them identify signs of financial control and abuse. She informed Members that work was being developed with the Work and Skills Team and with CityCo so that other employers and staff could receive this training. Members welcomed this stating that Credit Unions should be encouraged to take up the offer of this training.

The Deputy Leader said that coercive abuse was recognised in the definition of domestic violence and was punishable in law. She said that there had been a number of successful prosecutions in Manchester and nationally a prosecution had been secured by agencies rather than the victim.

The Domestic Violence Manager reported that the Bridging to Change programme was a voluntary programme designed for perpetrators to address their patterns of behaviour. She explained that initially the course addressed this with the individual prior to group sessions. She said that following completion of the course victims were supported for the following six months to ensure there were no reoffending. She advised that perpetrators could also attend follow up sessions.

The Domestic Violence Manager reported that the Safe and Together Project was designed to hold perpetrators to account and influence behaviour change. She said the emphasis was on early help and preventative work.

The Community Safety Lead said that the Greater Manchester (GM) Strategy sought to work across borders and Manchester contributed to the GM Forum. She advised that this allowed for the development and sharing of good practice to address the issue of domestic violence.

The Community Safety Lead explained that Domestic Homicide Reviews were introduced in 2011. She said that the purpose of these was to identify lessons learnt.

She said reviews were chaired by an independent person and involved all of the agencies that were engaged with the family concerned. The findings of a review were reported to the Community Safety Partnership and then the Home Office. The lessons learnt were then shared with the relevant Safeguarding Board.

In response to the discussions around FGM and So-called 'Honour Based Violence' the Domestic Violence Manager said there were projects specifically to work with families at risk of FGM and young people and adults affected by FGM. She reported that there was a grant specifically to fund and develop peer mentors in communities across the city to engage with communities around this issue. She said that support for south Asian women was provided citywide by Saheli Asian Women's Project and that there was a dedicated help line.

Decision

To note the report and request that an update report be submitted for consideration in approximately 18 months' time.

CESEC/18/36 Overview Report

A report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit was submitted. The overview report contained a list of key decisions yet to be taken within the Committee's remit, responses to previous recommendations and the Committee's work programme, which the Committee was asked to approve.

Decision

To note the report and agree the work programme.