

Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel

Thursday, 13 March 2014

Present: Councillors Mark Perks (Chair), Julia Berry, Keith Iddon and Kim Snape

Also in attendance

External representation: Detective Inspector Geoff Hurst (Lancashire Constabulary)

Officers: Gary Hall (Chief Executive), Paul Lowe (Merged Crime and Disorder Reduction Manager), Victoria Willett (Partnership Officer) and Dianne Scambler (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

12.OSP.49 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Steve Holgate (Chair) and Marion Lowe.

12.OSP.50 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel meeting held on 5 December 2013 be held as a correct record for signing by the Chair.

12.OSP.51 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of any interests.

12.OSP.52 SCRUTINY FOCUS: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DETECTIONS

The Panel had identified domestic violence detections as an area for further scrutiny and Detective Inspector Geoff Hurst attended the meeting to explain the processes that were undertaken to achieve the target and answer questions of the Members.

The new Corporate Strategy had been approved in November 2012 and identified the percentage of domestic violence detections as a key measure for success against the priority of 'clean, safe and healthy communities'. The measure was selected in order to focus attention on this issue and ensure a coordinated effort.

A target of 70% detection rate was set, that reflected the current police target for this indicator. The indicator is measures using data by the Police and reported to the Chorley and South Ribble Community Safety Partnership. Detective Inspector Hurst explained that the police no longer use this target as a way of measuring its detection success, for a variety of differing reasons. The recording of Domestic Violence incidents has changed over time with many parameters being altered. The age limit for recording has been lowered to 16 year olds, sibling to sibling incidents and other familial incidents are now included and the implementation of a wide range of interventions and alternative disposals other than prosecution and caution, have reduced the number reaching 'detection' stage. With this in mind the police are now focusing more on reducing risk through interventions and managing outcomes.

The Detective Inspector went on to explain the various initiatives and partnership working that is undertaken to reduce this risk.

The MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference), chaired by the police, meets monthly and focusses on the safety of victims of domestic abuse identified as being at high risk. The MARAC combines up to date risk information with a timely assessment of a victim's needs and links those directly to the provision of appropriate services for all those involved in a domestic abuse case: victim, children and perpetrator. Information is shared and joint decisions made on the most appropriate way to reduce or manage the identified risks.

The MARAC is made up of a core group of people, representing both the statutory and voluntary sector. The meeting involves contribution and commitment from agencies including police, probation, Children's Services, Adult's Services, Health, education, housing, substance misuse services, and specialist domestic abuse services, namely the Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs). IDVA's receive accredited training and support high risk victims of domestic abuse. Other agencies can attend on an ad hoc basis, when they have involvement in one of the cases being discussed.

Each victim referred to the MARAC will be allocated an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA). The IDVA is a trained specialist whose goal is the safety of domestic abuse victims, focusing on victims at high risk of harm. The IDVA will attempt to make contact with the referrer and the victim following receipt of a MARAC referral. Referrals can be made, and are encouraged, by any agency that identifies a victim of domestic abuse as being high risk.

Officers also work with other services in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), currently based in Leyland, with each agency - including Lancashire Constabulary, Lancashire County Council and Blackpool Council's Children's and Adult's Services, Lancashire Probation Trust, the NHS (including mental health services) and Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) - based in one building, allowing the efficient sharing of information. Once a person at risk is referred into the MASH, the different services undertake a joint risk assessment, arranging for appropriate interventions to reduce the threat of harm to the individual. There does not have to be a prosecution for a person to be referred to the MASH.

Chorley, South Ribble, West Lancashire and Preston Community Safety Partnerships are in the process of commissioning a pilot domestic abuse perpetrator project. An external organisation will be commissioned to deliver interventions to perpetrators who have been deemed high risk but not subject to statutory supervision. The Pilot has been funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner and will look to support five perpetrators across the borough of Chorley with the aim of reducing their reoffending behaviour.

Detective Inspector Hurst also explained how the police treat cases and presented some useful statistics on the difference between serious and less serious incidents. Since April 2013, there have been a total 366 incidents, 311 of which were detected. 12 were serious of which 8 were detected which is the figure that was actually reported on. Each case was treated differently dependent on individual circumstances; however they all received access to the same recourses and dealt with accordingly, regardless of ethnicity. Cultural awareness training is provided for all the IDVA's and all service providers are committed to providing a robust service for the BME communities. In some cases, the police would still prosecute, even if the victim dropped the charges, a certain amount of evidence could be submitted by the officer who responded to an incident and the courts were accepting more statements that were made at the time, but then subsequently withdrawn, due to pressure. The view is taken that it is more likely to have happened, if stated 'in the heat of the moment'. The use body cameras by the police are also being used more, although further resources are needed to fund more.

The police have also started to see greater reporting of domestic violence by members of the public. Media campaigns, such as the new Clare's Law, have helped

to raise awareness of the issue and people are not afraid to come forward to report incidences they have witnessed. The IDVA service can also be accessed by victims of domestic abuse, by being present at the courts and doctors surgeries across the borough.

Members accepted that it was hard to present a single indicator when there was so much work that actually went on behind it and AGREED that we may need to consider a different measure, such as referrals into the MASH given that this should lead to improved outcomes; this was something that could be considered by the partnership.

The Chair thanked Detective Inspector Geoff Hurst for his invaluable insight into the work being undertaken to reduce the risk of Domestic Violence across Chorley and South Ribble.

12.OSP.53 MONITORING OF THE ORGANISATIONAL PLAN

The Chief Executive submitted a report showing progress made against delivering the plans, key action and performance indicators in the single Organisational Improvement Plan 2013/14.

The single plan aims to focus the organisation on key priorities and maximise the value of available resources. All projects are recorded in the Myprojects system along with more detailed milestones so that progress can be monitored and managed throughout the year. Members were reminded that Myprojects was available online and that Members could monitor progress themselves.

At the end of February 35 actions had been completed. 54 actions were rated green, meaning they were progressing on schedule, 6 actions were rated amber, meaning there were some issues with delivery but overall work was not affected. No actions had been rated as red and 5 actions had not yet started.

A table showing the key actions that had been rated red amber or red with an explanation about the issue and action being taken to address them was provided for Members information.

Review of member information systems was currently rated amber due to timescales for completion. Member training was to be undertaken in April and May. The Chair queried what options were available for those members who could not take receipt of an ipad for health reasons and assurance was given that any such requests would be assessed on their own merits and alternative arrangements made accordingly.

A full list of performance indicators were provided for the Panel. The list included some measures that were reported on a quarterly basis. For those indicators, the most recent reporting period was at the end of the first quarter on 30 December 2013.

Thirty two indicators (71%) are on or above target, seven (16%) are outside the threshold and only 6 (13%) were off target. Of the six indicators currently off target, three were corporate strategy indicators with reasons and actions provided in the quarter three corporate report considered at Executive Cabinet in February. These were:

- % of customers dissatisfied with the service they have received from the Council
- % of domestic violence detections
- Number of affordable homes delivered

The reasons for current performance along with the steps being taken to achieve improvement were detailed within the report. The % of domestic violence detections had been highlighted for further scrutiny by this panel. It had been explained that they

don't use the 70% target anymore and are focusing on reducing risk through interventions and managing outcomes.

Members requested updates on the outcomes of the play and open space strategy consultation and private sector rented property database. Although the number of long term empty properties had improved, Councillor Snape queried the differing approaches of various departments when dealing with this issue. The Chief Executive explained that he was currently heading up a task group aimed at developing a consistent approach across the Council asked if something could be reported back to Members into a future edition of intheknow.

Cllr Berry asked about the indicator linked to the number of clubs and community groups supported by the Council. There was a need for community transport to and from deprived areas to clubs and groups. Officers suggested that they needed to link in with SPICE to access some of the social isolation initiatives being delivered.

Chair