

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 7 November 2011

Present: Councillor Adrian Lowe (Chair), Councillor Debra Platt (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Julia Berry, Magda Cullens, Doreen Dickinson, Steve Holgate, Keith Iddon, Beverley Murray, Rosie Russell, Joyce Snape, Paul Walmsley and Peter Wilson

Officers in attendance: Carol Russell (Democratic Services Manager), Paul Lowe (Joint Community Safety Manager), Heather Corson (Community Safety Officer - Vulnerability) and Dianne Scambler (Democratic and Member Services Officer).

Also present: Councillor Mick Titherington (Chair of Overview and Scrutiny at South Ribble Borough Council)

10.OS.53 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alison Hansford and Harold Heaton

10.OS.54 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

No declarations of any interest were declared.

10.OS.55 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 3 October be held as a correct record for signing by the Chair.

10.OS.56 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No questions were received by any member of the public.

10.OS.57 EXECUTIVE CABINET MINUTES

No issues were raised by any Member of the Committee for the Executive Cabinet meeting held on 20 October 2011.

10.OS.58 INDEPENDENT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ADVOCACY (IDVA) SERVICE

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is required to scrutinise the work of the Community Safety Partnership through at least one meeting a year. This year the Committee chose to scrutinise the Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) service – to understand the value of the service to residents of Chorley and South Ribble and to look at future delivery of the service.

The Committee heard from a number of partners from the Community Safety Partnership around three key themes:

- What value did they put on the IDVA service in the context of their organisation?
- How would they plug the gap in provision if the IDVA service ceased when the area based grant ended?
- Would their organisation be prepared to contribute to funding, if other partners did?

Acting Chief Superintendent Coulston-Herrmann attended to give the Lancashire Constabulary response:

The value of the IDVA service for the police was in the signposting it gave to victims of domestic violence to ensure they received the necessary help and support – in particular housing; childcare, money etc. where they had left the family home. If IDVA didn't provide this it was unlikely that another service would and it would therefore be down to the victim to find support. Inevitably this may mean the most vulnerable individuals and their families suffered.

In terms of future funding, the police were undertaking a review of the public protection unit with the aim of making savings. Because of the level of support the police provided to the MARACs (multi agency risk assessment conferences undertaken for all victims) then it was unlikely they would be able to contribute towards the IDVA service. Whilst loss of the IDVA service may ultimately increase the work of the public protection unit, it was felt that an approach to LCC was appropriate in terms of the benefits for adult social care and children's services.

It was also explained that all police officers are trained to a certain level in this type of work and that they had invested heavily in safeguarding issues and child abuse. The service also had a number of specialised trained officers that could also fulfil an investigative role.

Councillor Eric Bell – Executive Member for Places and Simon Clark, Head of Health, Environment and Neighbourhoods attended to give Chorley Council's response:

The value of IDVA was in the specialist help available to victims of domestic violence. In Chorley there were 490 incidents of domestic violence for the period April to July 2011 – an average of 4 cases a day. Whilst not all would be IDVA referrals, there was clearly a need for the service and it was an integral part of community safety support providing Specialist Domestic Violence Court services for victims. The service was oversubscribed and the loss of the service would inevitably put more people at risk. There was a clear link between repeat cases and the high incidence of murder or suicide.

In terms of contributing to future funding, this would be a Council budget decision as part of the annual budget process, however if all key partners looked to contribute towards funding the service it becomes an affordable amount and ultimately creates savings for all those partners. The service should have been mainstreamed rather than subject to annual funding and there was now an opportunity for partners to demonstrate their commitment to helping the victims of domestic violence in the borough.

Presently, funding for the service meant that the IDVA advisors were served notice every year whilst the decision for agreeing funding of the service from the Area Based Grant was resolved, putting these officers in a very difficult situation.

Members raised whether the Council would be willing to put more resources forward so that they could take the lead on a campaign programme around preventative measures by raising more awareness that in turn would help prevent domestic violence.

Councillor Peter Mullineaux – Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Streetscene and Mark Gaffney, Director of Neighbourhoods attended to give South Ribble Council's response:

The value of IDVA was in the support provided to victims and their families and the improved confidence victims felt having received that support. If each case costs an

estimated £14,000 to deal with (approximate total of each agency's input) then the financial benefits of preventing repeat cases are clear. The service contributes to the whole safeguarding agenda and has particular benefits for adult social care and children's services.

The cost of the service is £47,000 a year which would be a manageable amount if divided amongst partners – but not just between Chorley and South Ribble Councils. Budgets are extremely tight at the moment. The Community Safety Partnership needs to seek financial support from a range of partners for the service to continue.

Members asked if there was any evidence to suggest a link between alcohol and domestic violence and whether the Partnership had considered any alcohol related campaigns.

The Joint Community Safety Manager updated the Committee on some of the campaigns that the Partnership are involved with but made the point that although alcohol could be a contributory factor in domestic violence it would still continue to exist with or without alcohol.

Mel Ormesher, Community Safety and Criminal Justice Manager attended to give Lancashire County Council's response:

The value of the IDVA service is hard to quantify as it is part of a whole system approach. Lancashire County Council is a major contributor to supporting victims of domestic violence and has worked with the police on seeking funding. The difficulty in mainstreaming the funding of IDVA is that it works across so many organisations. LCC are undertaking a major piece of work to look at how they deliver support for victims of domestic violence in different areas. IDVA's position isn't sustainable and LCC are looking at how they can provide support for victims in a more sustainable way. The County Council cannot just consider funding for one part of the county but must look at the wider implications for the whole of their area. The review being undertaken will report to the next Community Safety Partnership meeting in January 2011.

Mary Kiddy, Consultant Nurse and Associate Director, attended to give NHS Central Lancashire's response:

The NHS supports victims of domestic abuse in many ways and whilst IDVA provides part of the care and support network – it isn't valued more than any other support service. Significant health resources go into helping victims – A & E, GP and hospital services, mental health services etc. and all these form part of safeguarding provision. In terms of financial support, all requests for funding need to be considered centrally and all projects/services requiring funding need to have been formally evaluated. There was an opportunity for IDVA to be evaluated through the National Institute of Clinical Excellence.

Written responses were received from representatives of the registered social landlords:

Comments about the IDVA service were sought from social landlords as the concentration of domestic violence cases in Chorley were in areas with large areas of social housing. Written comments from both CCH and New Progress Housing Associations detailed the provisions they make for victims of domestic abuse. Both housing associations said they would consider a request for a contribution to the future funding of the IDVA service although they gave no firm commitment.

The Joint Community Safety Manager outlined a number of key additional points for Members to consider, that included:

- The IDVA service was already oversubscribed against an artificial bar as the risk level had been raised.
- The main risk for victims is death.
- Domestic violence is a high priority in the Partnerships Strategic Assessment.
- Early intervention is evidenced to have saved the partner organisations thousands.
- Currently the IDVA service was not a statutory requirement and it was strongly felt that this was an area that needed to be addressed for the sustainability of the service.

Having listened to the comments of each of the partners, Members of the Committee agreed that the IDVA service was highly valued not only in supporting victims of domestic abuse but also in preventing repeat cases. In doing so it was of benefit to all partners and would, in the long term, mean savings within each organisation.

There was no clear commitment on funding from partners but Members felt that one organisation should take the lead by making a financial commitment and then work with the other partners through the Community Safety Partnership to urge them to contribute and ensure the continuation of the IDVA service. The Committee felt Chorley Council should take that lead.

Members of the Committee **RESOLVED**

- 1. That the Executive Cabinet be asked to consider making provision for funding for the Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy Service for Chorley and South Ribble in the 2012/13 budget and that Chorley lead the way in seeking funding from the other key partners who benefit from the service, namely the Police, south Ribble Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, the Primary Care Trust and Chorley Community Housing and other social landlords**
- 2. That the Executive Cabinet be asked to consider a three year commitment to fund the service from March 2012 to March 2015 (with annual review) during the budget process, and that a similar commitment be sought from other partners through the Community Safety Partnership.**
- 3. That the Committee write to the Home Secretary to ask them to consider make the IDVA service a statutory provision and to be copied to the partner representatives to ask them to consider doing the same.**
- 4. That the Executive Member (Places) feedback the minutes of the meeting to the next meeting of the Joint Community Safety Partnership meeting on 18 January 2012.**
- 5. That the Committee write to all the partner representatives to thank them all for their involvement in this review.**

10.OS.59 BUS INFORMATION DISPLAY AT CHORLEY INTERCHANGE

As part of the recent budget proposals at Lancashire County Council the decision had been taken to withdraw funding for the Bus Station Information Display Systems at five bus stations (including Chorley) with effect from 1 December 2011.

Lancaster City Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee had contacted all the authorities that were affected to ask if they would be willing to write to the County to submit a number of questions seeking further information about the decision as part of a co-ordinated approach, which were:

1. What was the reason behind choosing the five specific locations (including Chorley) for the withdrawal of the bus station information display systems? We assume there are other systems still being maintained across the County?
2. Whilst we appreciate that difficult budget decisions have to be made, what is the actual direct cost saving in Chorley for the switch off?
3. There are continuing costs in maintaining the poster information, the Traveline and internet bus information systems - has a cost/benefit analysis been undertaken on the impact of the proposed changes?
4. As the information system is to help encourage greater use of public transport, have operators been asked to maintain or contribute to the maintenance of this service?
5. Has the Leader of the County Council raised this matter with his district counterparts?

Members at Lancaster were also trying to arrange for a meeting with the County Council to discuss the decision further and were asking Chorley to support them.

RESOLVED – That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to support Members at Lancaster by requesting the Chief Executive of Chorley Council to write a letter to County Council to ask the questions outlined above and to support them in their request for a meeting.

Chair