

**PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL****Community Safety Committee****8 June 2016****Perth and Kinross Violence Against Women Partnership  
Annual Report 2015-16****Director (Housing and Social Work)****PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report introduces the Perth and Kinross Violence Against Women Partnership Annual Report for 2015-16 and outlines its improvement actions.

**1. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES**

- 1.1 Violence against women and girls, in any form, has no place in a successful Scotland. It damages health and wellbeing, limits freedom and potential, and is a violation of the most fundamental human rights.
- 1.2 Violence against women and girls encompasses (but is not limited to):
  - Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family (including children and young people), within the general community or in institutions, including domestic abuse, rape, and incest
  - Sexual harassment, bullying and intimidation in any public or private space, including work
  - Commercial sexual exploitation, including prostitution, lap dancing, stripping, pornography and trafficking; child sexual abuse, including familial sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation and online abuse
  - So called 'honour based' violence, including dowry related violence, female genital mutilation, forced and child marriages, and 'honour' crimes
- 1.3 Too often incidents of violence and abuse against women and girls go unreported, and there is ample evidence on a whole range of fronts to support the view that violence against women and girls remains a serious issue in our communities across Perth and Kinross:
  - 944 incidents of domestic abuse were recorded in Perth and Kinross by Police Scotland up to the end of the third quarter of 2015. 79% of all such incidents had a female victim and male perpetrator
  - During this same period in Perth and Kinross, Police Scotland recorded 30 rape offences, 3 assault with attempt to rape offences and a further 62 offences of sexual assault. Where the victim's gender is known, 95% of rapes or assault with attempt to rape offences recorded by the police in this period had a female victim

- Recorded crime statistics up to the end of the third quarter of 2015 show an increase in the number of offences of 'breach of the peace' to 1093 from 721, from the same period in 2014. This was partly driven by offences with a domestic abuse aggravator, particularly for offences such as stalking or threatening and abusive behaviour
- One in five children in the UK will have experienced domestic abuse by the time they reach 18
- In a study published by the NSPCC, girls experienced more frequent and more severe emotional, physical and sexual partner violence than boys – one in three 13 to 17 year old girls reported some form of sexual violence. Girls reported high levels of coercive control including surveillance through the use of online technologies and, unlike the boys in this study, reported that their welfare was severely detrimentally affected

(These two statistics extracted from Scottish Government/COSLA publication "Equally Safe" 2016)

## **2. PERTH AND KINROSS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN PARTNERSHIP**

- 2.1 The work of the Perth and Kinross Violence Against Women Partnership is underpinned by the Scottish Government strategy 'Equally Safe'. 'Equally Safe' is the Scottish Government strategy, the aim of which is to take action on all forms of violent and abusive behaviours perpetrated against women and girls in Scotland. Equally Safe was originally introduced in 2014, but was updated in March 2016 to reflect the additional harm caused to children who may be directly or indirectly affected by abusive relationships.
- 2.2 The Perth and Kinross Violence against Women Partnership (PKVAWP) is a multi-agency group with membership from the statutory and voluntary sector which include Police Scotland, Perth and Kinross Council, NHS Tayside, Perthshire Women's Aid, Barnardo's, Rape Crisis Perth and Kinross, Victim Support and the Scottish Prison Service. The Partnership has also recently welcomed the MEAD Project, representing ethnic minority groups onto the partnership.
- 2.2 Our overarching aim is to encourage an integrated partnership approach to preventing violence against women and girls across Perth and Kinross; developing a unified approach to supporting and protecting women, children and young people and which takes account of and addresses the challenges arising from perpetrators of Violence against Women.
- 2.3 The work of the Partnership follows the 4 P's principles:
- Prevention
  - Protection
  - Provision
  - Participation

2.4 2015/16 has been a challenging period for the Partnership. Due to changes within their own organisations, both the Chair and Deputy Chair had to give up these roles which had a significant impact in respect of the leadership of the partnership. In addition, the Partnership also lost their co-ordinator during the same period and these changes had a marked effect on the work of the partnership.

### **3. PROJECTS WHICH SUPPORT POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR WOMEN**

#### **3.1 Perthshire Domestic Abuse Outreach Project**

This project is managed by Women's Aid on behalf of the partnership and provides information, emotional and practical support, advocacy, housing support and follow on assistance to women and children in rural Perthshire who are or have experienced domestic abuse. Specialist advocacy support is available for women in rural areas who have been assessed as being at high risk. In this year the project has assisted 79 women who have 97 children between them, with emotional and practical support and an additional 53 women assessed as being at the highest risk have been supported by the advocate for the project. Through this project, women are empowered to make positive choices by building their self confidence and resilience. Staff support them to remain safely in their home or when it is not safe to do so, to access suitable, alternative accommodation elsewhere. Access to outreach staff within their own area reduces isolation and provides links to vital services.

#### **3.2 Fireproof letterboxes**

Fireproof letterboxes are supplied to women at risk as a result of domestic abuse, perhaps where the perpetrator has been excluded from the house, or the service user has been rehomed. This helps to prevent hazardous and/or flammable materials being posted into the house. These letterboxes are fitted by community wardens employed by the Council. As a result affected women feel safe and supported in their homes.

#### **3.3 Bail address initiative**

The bail address initiative was set up in Perth and Kinross as a result of concerns that alleged perpetrators of domestic abuse were offering addresses when making bail applications which had not been adequately verified as appropriate places of residence in relation to victim access, and which were generally otherwise suitable. As a sub-group of Perth and Kinross Violence Against Women Partnership, Perth Criminal Justice Social Work department took the lead in developing a process with Police Scotland, which they undertake, in which all bail applications in respect of an alleged offence of domestic abuse are checked in relation to victim safety/proximity and suitability. This information is then forwarded to the Procurator Fiscal prior to the bail hearing ensuring the relevant information was in court prior to any decisions being made. This helps victims to feel protected and enables Police Scotland to maintain an awareness of the whereabouts of alleged perpetrators.

### **3.4 Perth and Kinross Independent Domestic Abuse Advocacy**

Perth and Kinross Independent Domestic Abuse Advocacy is managed by Perthshire Women's Aid and works to secure the safety of women and children across Perth and Kinross who have been victims of domestic abuse and are at high risk of harm from intimate partners or ex-partners working in close collaboration with the police. It is a short term, normally 6-8 week intervention, during which time the advocate works closely with police in the Domestic Abuse Unit. Advocates engage with adult victims from point of crisis, liaise with multiple services to keep women and their children safe, initially by ensuring safe accommodation and being clear with the service user what she should do if she feels threatened. Early intervention, quick access to safety measures and support from other agencies has seen a very sharp reduction in the number of high risk cases in Perth and Kinross. The number of women on the Police high risk register has reduced from 25-30 to as low as three. 58 women were supported through this process in the Perth area, with a further 53 women being supported in rural Perthshire. Of this total, 62 women who were assessed as being at greatest risk of harm were referred to Marac. Advocates are the primary source of contact for women going through the MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference), ensuring their voice is heard at the meeting and feeding back decisions which help to ensure their safety in the longer term.

### **3.5 Skyguard Alarm System**

Skyguard are funded through the community safety partnership and are supplied by the police for women who are identified as being possible victims of violence as a result of domestic abuse. The Skyguard is a portable device which ensures a rapid response from the police in the event the woman believes herself to be at risk of harm, thereby reducing her feelings of stress and anxiety and reducing the likelihood that she would be the victim of further abuse.

### **3.6 Care and Repair Initiative**

Perthshire Care and Repair service operate a domestic abuse initiative which aims to improve the safety of women, children and young people in the home. This is small independent service, managed by the housing association and where there is an identified need will support women deemed at risk in private accommodation. Through this service, home safety improvements can be made which will reduce the likelihood of a domestic abuse perpetrator accessing a property by force. The initiative can install peepholes, door locks, window locks and door chains. The scheme is open to anyone living in Perth and Kinross who is at risk of Domestic Abuse. This relatively small measure will help women to feel secure and reduce the impact of fear and anxiety.

### **3.7 Safe Accommodation Strategy**

We recognise that for many women wanting to leave an abusive relationship, securing alternative accommodation is key. Records indicate that in 2015/16 135 women presented as homeless as a result of domestic abuse in Perth and Kinross. Of these, 32 women had dependent children, 4 women were pregnant, 14 women had mental health issues, 2 women had learning support

needs, 8 women had physical or medical issues and 7 women had drug and alcohol dependency issues. Our safe accommodation strategy recognises the importance of working collaboratively in order to ensure that potentially vulnerable individuals are provided with safe accommodation and are supported to adjust and recover during a very difficult period.

### **3.8 Perthshire CEDAR (Children Experiencing Domestic Abuse Recovery) Project**

The Perthshire CEDAR project is managed by Women's Aid on behalf of Perth and Kinross Violence Against Women's Partnership. Now in its' fourth year, the project continues to provide a child centred focus which enables mothers to support their children to recover from the impact of domestic abuse. The project has supported 2 women's groups and 6 children's groups, supporting a total of 38 women and 60 children. The aim of CEDAR is threefold:

Outcome 1 – Children have an improved understanding of domestic abuse and knowledge of how to be safe and a greater sense of self-worth and wellbeing.

Outcome 2 – Mothers have a greater understanding of the impact of domestic abuse on children, improved relationships with their children and a greater sense of self-worth and wellbeing.

Outcome 3 – Partner agencies better understand the complexity of domestic abuse and its impact on children, leading to improved multi-agency responses to domestic abuse.

A recent external evaluation of the CEDAR project was undertaken which highlighted that all three outcomes are being achieved, thereby improving the quality of life for women and children in Perth and Kinross.

### **3.9** Whilst it is important to recognise and acknowledge the positive work being done across the partnership, we are not complacent and recognise that much more needs to be done to support women and girls across our communities who are affected by gender based violence. To this end we have identified a number of improvement actions we will be taking forward into 2017 to support our work.

The Partnership's Annual Report highlights the following improvement actions:

- We will carry out a critical path analysis for service users to identify gaps in service provision and areas of good practice in order to avoid duplication of services, to prevent service users from having to work with a range of organisations who are effectively providing the same service; to ensure there are no gaps in service provision and to provide clear signposting for all service users to reduce anxiety and to ensure clients feel supported throughout what is a very difficult and stressful time

- We will share information amongst the partners and work collaboratively in the development of individual and joint services in order to ensure that service provision is the best it can be, that staff are also supported and that good practice is shared on an ongoing basis.
- We will develop a performance framework, taking account of national guidance, to measure effectively the work of the partnership. We recognise that an effective performance framework for the partnership is essential for us to be able to review and develop our services and will promote a coordinated approach to service delivery, whilst also being able to evidence in a more meaningful way to stakeholders the positive contribution we make to the life improvement
- We will plan an integrated programme of activities to coincide with the national 16 Days of Action and ensure the maximum publicity is achieved to highlight the issues of domestic abuse and the work of the partnership across Perth and Kinross
- We will identify and acknowledge the particular issues affecting women and girls in highland and rural Perthshire and work with a full range of partners towards addressing them in order to ensure women affected by domestic abuse do not feel isolated or disadvantaged as a result of their location.

#### **4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 4.1 Violence against women is a major societal issue which is recognised at both national and international level and denies women and girls the most fundamental of human rights: life, liberty, integrity, freedom of movement and dignity of the person. The Perth and Kinross Violence against Women Partnership seeks to encourage understanding of violence against women from an equalities and human rights perspective and is committed to challenging and addressing the many issues arising.
- 4.2 Through their improvement actions, and as outlined in our Report, the Partnership intend to build upon the positive work currently being done being done within and across our communities to support the vision set out in 'Equally Safe'; that *'all individuals are equally safe and respected, and where women and girls live free from all forms of violence and abuse – and the attitudes that help perpetrate it.'* This is how we will deliver better outcomes for women and girls across Perth and Kinross.
- 4.3 It is recommended that the Committee:
1. Note and support the work being undertaken by the Perth and Kinross Violence Against Women Partnership.
  2. Instruct the Director of Housing and Community Care to bring forward a report regarding the activity and performance of the Perth and Kinross Violence Against Women Partnership in 12 months.

**Author(s)**

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**Approved**

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Bill Atkinson	Director (Housing & Community Care)	<b>12 May 2016</b>

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## 1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

<b>Strategic Implications</b>	<b>Yes / None</b>
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	<b>Yes</b>
Corporate Plan	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Resource Implications</b>	
Financial	<b>None</b>
Workforce	<b>None</b>
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	<b>None</b>
<b>Assessments</b>	
Equality Impact Assessment	<b>None</b>
Strategic Environmental Assessment	<b>None</b>
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	<b>None</b>
Legal and Governance	<b>None</b>
Risk	<b>None</b>
<b>Consultation</b>	
Internal	<b>None</b>
External	<b>None</b>
<b>Communication</b>	
Communications Plan	<b>None</b>

### 1. Strategic Implications

#### Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement

- 1.1 The recommendation in this report will assist in the delivery of both the Perth and Kinross Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement in respect of the following local outcomes:

- (i) *Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens*
- (iii) *Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy*
- (iv) *Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives*
- (v) *Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations*

#### Corporate Plan

- 1.2 The Councils Corporate Plan 2013 – 2018 lays out five strategic objectives which provide clear strategic direction, inform decisions at a corporate and service level and shape resources allocation. The relevant strategic objectives in respect of this report are as follows:

- (ii) *Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;*
- (iii) *Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;*
- (iv) *Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and*
- (v) *Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.*



## 2. Resource Implications

### Financial

- 2.1 This report contains no proposals which would have a financial impact on the Council.

### Workforce

- 2.2 There are no workforce implications arising from this report.

### Asset Management (land, property, IT)

- 2.3 There are no Asset management implications arising from this report.

## 3. Assessments

### Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.

This section should reflect that the proposals have been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:

- (i) Assessed as **not relevant** for the purposes of EqIA

### Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.2 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals. However, no action is required as the Act does not apply to the matters presented in this report. This is because the Committee are requested to note the contents of the report only and the Committee are not being requested to approve, adopt or agree to an action or to set the framework for future decisions.

### Sustainability

- 3.3 There are no issues in respect of sustainability from the proposals in this report.

### Legal and Governance

- 3.4 This report contains no proposals which would have a legal or governance impact on the Council.

## Risk

There are no issues in respect of risk from the proposals in this report.

## **4. Consultation**

### Internal

4.1 None.

### External

4.2 None.

## **5. Communication**

5.1 There are no communication issues in respect of the proposals in this report.

## **2. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

2.1 None.

## **3. APPENDICES**

3.1 Appendix I – Perth and Kinross Violence Against Women Annual Report 2015/16.

Appendix II - Extract from “Equally Safe” - Scotland’s strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls