



**Domestic Abuse
Task Group**

- Draft Report -

Chairman:

Councillor Natalie Reeves

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Councillor Marge Anderton
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**Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Chairman: Councillor Michael Vincent**

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Introduction

Definition

The Home Office defines domestic abuse as¹:

“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

Controlling behaviour is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.”

Purpose

The stated purpose of the task group was to review the current provision for domestic abuse services in Wyre and to make recommendations for improvements that could affect Wyre residents.

Context

The current contract with Victim Support and the various grant agreements with other service providers for Lancashire Victim Services are scheduled to end on 31 March 2017 with a need for services to be re-commissioned to continue the provision of support for victims of crime.

Lancashire County Council's (LCC) contracts for domestic abuse services provided on behalf the County, District Authorities and the Police and Crime Commissioner for medium and high risk victims are also scheduled to end on 31 March 2017 with a clear need for a continued provision of services for victims.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-violence-and-abuse>

The early support service for children and young people who have been victims or witnesses of domestic abuse, commissioned by LCC, is also due to end on 31st March 2017.

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner has been working with NHS England reviewing the provision of support services for victims of rape and sexual assault. This has included mapping the current provision of Independent Sexual Violence Advisers and reviewing the provision of counselling and therapy services.

The task group was aware from the outset that from 1 April 2015 it became a statutory responsibility for the Police and Crime Commissioner to deliver victim services and that the re-commissioning process would take place during 2016 resulting in a new contract to run a fully integrated victim service from 1 April 2017. The review was carried out against this background.

The new service

The re-commissioning process has recently been completed at the time of writing (January 2017) and, following an evaluation and interview process, the interview panel recommended to the Police and Crime Commissioner that a bid submitted by Victim Support represented the best value for money.

Whilst it is acknowledged that Victim Support is a national provider of services for victims of crime, including domestic abuse, sexual abuse and hate crime, their submission indicated an intention to work with a number of Lancashire based third sector organisations.

Victim Support have already developed relationships with Disability Equality North West, based in Preston, Renaissance, based in Blackpool, Aawaz Lancashire in Hyndburn and the Lancashire Council of Mosques and are looking to work with a number of third sector youth organisations to deliver NEST Lancashire, the young victims service.

The service will be delivered through four Multi-Crime Teams located across Lancashire to ensure that delivery is embedded in local communities. These Teams will include specialist workers for Domestic Abuse, Sexual Abuse and Hate Crime as well as Independent Victim Advocates who will provide 1-2-1 support for victims. Additional support will be provided for each Team through trained volunteers.

Aims of Review

The aims of the review, as specified in the scoping document (see Appendix A), were as follows:

1. To understand the funding arrangements for domestic abuse in Lancashire and Wyre
2. To understand the use of domestic abuse services in Wyre
3. To identify gaps in services
4. To consider the impact of potential closures of services, including refuges on the residents of Wyre
5. To review the effectiveness of communication between partner agencies and to make recommendations

The Review Process

The review has been wide-ranging. It was primarily carried out by interviewing 'witnesses' at task group meetings, including representatives from a wide range of organisations who, together, have been providing domestic abuse services in Wyre.

A representative from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) also attended one meeting and the OPCC's contribution by way of keeping the task group informed throughout the re-commissioning process has been very much appreciated by councillors.

Summary of evidence provided by the Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder, Councillor Roger Berry and Neil Greenwood, Head of Environmental Health and Community Safety

Councillor Roger Berry and Neil Greenwood provided a wealth of background information in order to detail the context within which the review was to take place.

They informed councillors about the current position regarding the provision of domestic abuse services in Wyre. The main points made by Mr Greenwood were:

- i. The Strategic Assessment for Community Safety was reviewed during 2015 as part of the 3 year cycle.
- ii. One of the key conclusions from that review was that domestic violence is a priority within Wyre.
- iii. Over the last 3 years 10% of all crime in Wyre has been related to domestic abuse, so the problem is significant.
- iv. There has been an increase in the number of Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) held in the Wyre area.
- v. Domestic abuse cases are serviced by a number of different agencies.
- vi. The main service to victims of domestic abuse is provided by Independent Domestic Violence Advocates, who work with the victim at crisis point.
- vii. There is a pan-Lancashire commissioned service operating in Wyre. Wyre Council has been paying £10,000 per annum (up to 2015/16) towards this service. No monies were requested for 2016/17 as there was adequate funding available for the service without the agreed annual contributions. Other partners include Lancashire County Council (LCC), other District Councils in Lancashire and the Clinical Commissioning Groups.
- viii. LCC is responsible for the procurement of this service and to that end a Pan-Lancashire Strategic Domestic Abuse Board was re-established in October 2014.
- ix. The current contract ends on 31 March 2017.
- x. The current provider of the pan-Lancashire service in Wyre is a company called LetGo, based in Lancaster. They provide services for high and medium risk victims.
- xi. Wyre also has access to a service provided by Fylde Coast Women's Aid which has operated in the area for a number of years.

- xii. Currently, Fylde Coast Women's Aid does not receive any funding from the pan-Lancashire commissioned service.
- xiii. Fylde Coast Women's Aid also run the Wyre Refuge for victims of domestic violence for which they receive some funding from Supporting People.
- xiv. Supporting People grant funding is facing significant cuts, which places the future of the refuge in some doubt.
- xv. The Fylde & Wyre Health & Wellbeing Partnership joint officers group discussed the likely implications of the potential loss of the Supporting People funding at their meeting on 1st July 2016.
- xvi. Key messages: (a) the non-statutory cuts planned by LCC are likely to have a big impact on statutory services; (b) there will be implications for clients, stakeholders and the community if services are lost.
- xvii. Wyre Council's housing advice section has a statutory duty to assist victims of domestic abuse under housing legislation. The Wyre refuge is partly funded by housing benefit. The absence of a refuge would have an impact on this statutory duty.
- xviii. Wyre's housing team also funds the Sanctuary Scheme, which provides advice on safety and installs minor security improvements for the victim.
- xix. The Community Safety Team run public health campaigns to raise awareness of the services available.
- xx. There are Specialist Domestic Violence Courts (SDVCs) whose aim is to increase the effectiveness of the criminal justice system. SDVCs represent a partnership approach to domestic violence by the police, prosecutors, court staff, the probation service and specialist support services for victims. Magistrates sitting in these courts are fully aware of the approach and have received additional training. These court systems provide a specialised way of dealing with domestic violence cases in magistrates' courts. They refer to the approach of a whole system, rather than simply a court building or jurisdiction. Agencies work together to identify, track and risk assess domestic violence cases, support victims of domestic violence and share information better so that more offenders are brought to justice.

Summary of Evidence provided by T/Detective Sergeant Ellie Gomerson and Peter Yates (Domestic Abuse Lead), Lancashire Constabulary

T/Detective Sergeant Ellie Gomerson and Peter Yates made a powerpoint presentation to councillors. The presentation focused on the questions that had been raised in advance by members of the task group, but was supplemented by a more general discussion about the role that the Lancashire Constabulary plays in dealing with incidents of domestic abuse.

After a complaint has been made an officer makes an initial assessment of risk. In high risk cases the perpetrator is visited or interviewed the following day. Relevant information about the family and children, for example, is obtained and passed to Children's Services, if appropriate. High risk cases are referred to a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). If a perpetrator makes it difficult to be interviewed (by disappearing, for example) the police have access to alarms and mobile phones which can be provided to the victim or a place in a refuge can be arranged.

Legislation on coercive control was introduced on 29 December 2015, for which officers require further specific training. The police are still learning about gathering evidence in such cases and what the CPS threshold for prosecution is. Coercive control is not usually a stand-alone offence; there is usually other evidence available. In years to come it is anticipated that prosecutions will be made for coercive control alone. The processes for coercive control remain the same as for any other form of domestic abuse.

T/Detective Sergeant Ellie Gomerson and Peter Yates made a number of other points in response to questions from members of the task group:

- There has been something of a plateau in the number of referrals over the past couple of years, but numbers are just beginning to show signs of increase again
- Police cautions are used to divert people from the court process where appropriate, but the more serious cases are prosecuted
- There is typically an under-reporting of abuse of men
- Abuse in care homes usually comes within vulnerable adults' safeguarding procedures
- Requests under Clare's Law are quite common although precise statistics are not yet available
- The police work in partnership with a wide range of other organisations
- The police are always seeking to develop working relationships, with schools and GPs in particular
- The police have their own screening procedures to ensure that everything that goes to MARAC is still high risk. It is understood that other organisations are also in the process of developing their own screening procedures in order to try to help manage the high numbers of cases that are being referred
- A perpetrator programme has been run in Blackpool, mainly for medium risk cases, the project having originally been run in prisons only. The bulk of referrals are made by Children's Social Care.

It was suggested that Wyre Council might get more involved with the White Ribbon

Campaign, an annual event which took place for sixteen days from 25 November 2016, in which men sought to end violence against women.

It was further suggested that it would be beneficial for the council to consider appointing Domestic Abuse Champions, whose responsibility would be to raise awareness in the workplace and to provide someone neutral to speak to.

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Summary of Evidence from Glenda Smith, Assistant Service Manager, Fylde Coast Women's Aid (FCWA)

Glenda Smith, Assistant Service Manager, Fylde Coast Women's Aid (FCWA) made a powerpoint presentation to councillors. The presentation focused on the questions that had been raised in advance by members of the task group, but was supplemented by a more general discussion about the role that the FCWA plays in providing a domestic abuse service across the Fylde Coast.

Funding is a major issue, all the Independent Domestic Abuse Advisor (IDVA) posts relying on external funding. Sources of funding include the Big Lottery, Children in Need, Comic Relief and Lloyds TSB. A second outreach worker is funded from reserves. FCWA also employs a part-time funding officer.

Councillors asked a number of additional questions, in response to which Ms Smith made the following points:

- FCWA works particularly closely with the police, social services and health services
- FCWA liaises with the Clinical Commissioning Groups where appropriate but has identified working closely with GP surgeries as a particular area that could be improved
- Working with Weeton Barracks is especially problematic as it is a closed military installation
- Having an Independent Domestic Abuse Advisor (IDVA) working at Blackpool Victoria Hospital has proved to be a "big success"
- FCWA is often asked to deal with disclosures under Clare's Law, even though it should be the responsibility of the commissioned service
- The breakdown of referrals by gender in Wyre shows that 21% are male, an unusually high figure that probably reflects the fact that an IDVA for men is in place
- Women stay at the refuge for anything from a few hours to a number of months
- The Wyre refuge has a 90% occupancy rate
- There are criteria that are applied to the refuge which could exclude some women. For example it would not be possible for a Schedule 1 offender to be accommodated, nor someone on drugs nor with certain mental health conditions (e.g schizophrenia)
- No male children over the age of sixteen are accepted at the refuge. For some refuges in other areas the upper age limit is as low as 12.
- If there are reasons why someone could not be accepted at a refuge other options are explored through ukrefugesonline.org. Other hostels or bed and breakfast accommodation are alternative options which are considered through the local housing department
- There appear to be some difficulties regarding the services provided by the commissioned service, gaps that FCWA are happy to fill, subject to their own resource capacity

FCWA enjoys a positive relationship with Wyre Council, with no geographical areas of the borough being particularly problematic.

It was suggested that Wyre Council might consider

- (i) Promoting International Women's Day (March 8), and
- (ii) Continuing to support the White Ribbon Campaign (25 November 2016)

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Summary of Evidence from

(i) Emma Sylvester, Wyre Specialist Debt Caseworker, and

(ii) Bridget Cheyne, Independent Domestic Violence Adviser/Service Manager (Chorley/South Ribble), Citizens Advice Lancashire West

Emma Sylvester, Wyre Specialist Debt Caseworker, and Bridget Cheyne, Independent Domestic Violence Adviser and Service Manager (Chorley/ South Ribble), both of whom worked for Citizens Advice Lancashire West (CALW), made a presentation about their respective roles and, in particular, their involvement in providing support for victims of domestic abuse.

Emma Sylvester, Wyre Specialist Debt Caseworker

Ms Sylvester is a specialist money and debt adviser based at the CALW office in Fleetwood. Victims of domestic abuse are frequently faced with multiple problems, and sometimes initially seek help from CALW on financial issues. Ms Sylvester comes into contact with clients who have been subjected to some form of domestic abuse approximately 2-4 times a week.

She described two recent case studies which highlighted typical issues.

In the first case, the victim had been forced by her abusive husband to obtain various loans. He had then spent the money before leaving her with extensive debts. CALW eventually managed to persuade the lenders to write-off the debts.

In the second case, involving more direct and severe physical abuse, as well as financial coercion, a major bank and a well-known pay-day loan provider had both been persuaded to write off substantial debts when the circumstances of the victim had been presented to them. In that case the victim had also been provided with refuge by Fylde Women's Aid.

Bridget Cheyne Independent Domestic Violence Adviser and Service Manager (Chorley/ South Ribble)

Citizens Advice Lancashire West is currently commissioned by Lancashire Council to provide medium and high risk domestic abuse support services in the Chorley and South Ribble area. Feedback from both clients and partner agencies indicates that the wide range of services provided by CALW and the ability for victims to simply walk in safely without drawing attention to themselves is a unique and very positive feature of the service they provide. Although most of their domestic abuse referrals (approximately 90%) are from the police, self-referrals are increasing, as are the total number of cases being dealt with. Ms Cheyne stressed that they work very closely with a range of other agencies, particularly housing associations, the probation service and the police.

Ms Cheyne provided details of two further harrowing cases to illustrate how CALW's services are operated and how they collaborate closely with other agencies. One involved severe physical abuse from a violent partner and the other the abuse of a terminally ill woman in her 40's by her alcohol-dependent son. In the first case the

perpetrator had been convicted and given a long prison sentence and in the second case the victim had been kept safe and free from abuse in the last months of her life.

Councillors asked a number of questions, in response to which the following additional evidence was provided:

- Extending the comprehensive, “wrap around” service currently available in Chorley and South Ribble to Wyre (and other parts of Lancashire) would help to fill some of the gaps in current provision.
- CALW work with Let Go and Fylde Women’s Aid, although the Fleetwood office currently has more regular dealings with Fylde Coast Women’s Aid.
- CALW are part of a collaborative tender for domestic abuse services in Lancashire, which would include provision for a specialist domestic abuse adviser in each of the 14 districts in Lancashire.
- A very close working relationship which had been developed with the police in Chorley and South Ribble was one of the main reasons why the service was more effective than in other areas, in Ms Cheyne’s opinion.
- Proactive coordination with the police enabled the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Committee (MARAC) for Chorley and South Ribble to take action more quickly and more effectively than in some areas.

Summary of Evidence from Liz Canavan, Victims and Partnerships Officer, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)

Liz Canavan, gave an overview of the work of the OPCC and the Office's role in the commissioning of domestic abuse services. Ms Canavan's presentation comprised four sections:

1 Lancashire Victim Services

- Statutory responsibility of the Police and Crime Commissioner to deliver victim services since April 1, 2015
- Lancashire Victim Services and Nest Lancashire are the over-arching names for the services commissioned by the OPCC
- Services are currently provided by:
 - Victim Support
 - Victim's Voice
 - Families, Health and Wellbeing Consortium
 - Trust House
 - The Birchall Trust

Lancashire Victim Services is the adult service, including specialist commissions. Nest Lancashire provides a bespoke service for young people

2 The Service deals with

- Approximately 40,000 referrals a year into Victim Support – supporting all victims of crime
- Hate crime victims
- Child victims of sexual assault through counselling and play therapy
- Young victims (10-18) through the Nest Lancashire young person's service
- Restorative Justice referrals
- Standard-risk domestic abuse cases picked up through a Lancashire MASH pilot

A pilot project of the MASH involves a Victim Support worker sitting in the Lancashire MASH, picking up "standard risk" referrals for which there is no commission within Lancashire.

There is often a lengthy delay in these referrals being contacted, which results in many victims declining the support offered.

3 The future

- New contract will take effect from April 1, 2017
- Integrated service
- Now includes domestic abuse services for Lancashire-12 area, commissioned on behalf of LCC and district councils
- Also includes provision for adult victims of sexual abuse, through ISVA support, counselling and pre-trial therapy

The new integrated service would be either a lead provider or consortium model. Currently, quarterly performance reviews are held with all the different commissioned services. Under the new commission, the OPCC would deal with the lead provider. All services would either be provided by the lead, or they will commission other organisations to deliver elements of the specification on their behalf.

4 Domestic abuse specification

- Integrated service
- Dedicated domestic abuse helpline
- Immediate risk management & safety plan within 48 hours
- Must provide service for medium and high risk victims – standard risk optional
- Requirement to work with all victims who come through MASH
- Support to be provided to both victim and family
- Referrals to be accepted for children and young people affected by DA
- Support for victims and former partners of perpetrators on LCC programme

The newly commissioned service would be streamlined with duplication avoided. The medium and high risk service and the early support service would be incorporated, having previously been run as separate contracts within the county council. The new arrangement would reduce duplication.

Support would be provided by an Independent Domestic Violence Adviser or Domestic Abuse worker, dependent on level of need, who would remain the point of contact throughout a client's journey through the service.

Ms Canavan made the following comments in response to questions from councillors:

- Hate crimes are dealt with by Victim's Voice.
- Restorative Justice is administered by Lancashire Constabulary.
- A Victim Support worker for standard referrals has been based in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) since May 2016. The original intention was to provide the service for the whole of Lancashire, but with numbers so high it was decided to limit the service to those four areas that did not have any other provision for standard referrals, namely Chorley, South Ribble, Lancaster and Morecambe. There is scope for this pilot to be extended through the new commission if it proves effective.
- An integrated service would help overcome some of the data-sharing difficulties that currently exist.
- An holistic service would be provided, which would reduce the feeling of competition between providers, facilitate information-sharing and protect the refuges.
- There had yet to be a domestic homicide review for a 'high risk' case, emphasizing the importance of allocating appropriate resources to 'standard risk' cases.
- All bidders had been asked to cost a standard risk package so that could be included in the new commissioned service.
- Bids would be evaluated during week commencing 7 November 2016, with interviews the following week. It was likely that the outcome would be made

public before Christmas.

- The contract would be for three years initially, with an option for a further two years. A five-year term would provide greater consistency and security for the provider(s).
- The police currently assess risk on the basis of the incident, not the victim. Negotiations with the police are on-going to see if the risk assessment could be changed to focus on the victim/couple instead.
- A perpetrators' programme will continue to be managed by LCC (delivered by Relate) until the current contract expires. The arrangement by which the programme will be continued will be reviewed at that point, one option being to bring the programme within the whole specification.
- The provision of a dedicated 24-hour domestic abuse help-line was part of the specification.
- All districts have been asked to contribute the same money in 2017-18 as they contributed in 2015-16; no contributions had been necessary for 2016-17 because of a previous under-spend.

The task group expressed concern about the prospect of an outside agency providing the service unless they have sufficient bases in Lancashire to ensure face-to-face contact and support. The task group took the view that to use the phone as a primary means of contact with victims totally unacceptable. Ms Canavan confirmed that if an outside body won the contract one of the prerequisites would be that they had sufficient local bases.

Key Performance Indicators will be monitored quarterly by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to ensure quality of service provision. It is also likely that a new approach will be taken to ensure that district councils are represented effectively rather than continuing with the present arrangement whereby a number of district councils are represented by one person.

Summary of Evidence from Anne Rogers, Nicola Byrne and Jo Wade, Letgo North Lancashire

The following three representatives of Letgo North Lancashire provided the task group with an overview of their work and respective roles before entering into a discussion with councillors and responding to questions:

Anne Rogers, Positive Impact Manager
Nicola Byrne, Service Manager
Jo Wade, Team Leader

Impact Housing Association started as a co-operative in 1975. Although it had grown significantly since then it still focused on vulnerable people. Since being awarded the contract for the delivery of domestic abuse services in North Lancashire, approximately 50% of referrals have come from Lancaster, 30% from Wyre and 20% from Fylde.

Referrals in Wyre over the past twelve months have included 515 in the medium risk and 138 in the high risk categories (total 653). 79% of referrals in 2015 came from the police and 67% so far in 2016 (information accurate on 3 November 2016).

In response to questions the following evidence was also given:

- Letgo deal with some standard risk cases despite only being contracted for medium and high risk. Standard risk cases are usually referred to Fylde Coast Women's Aid. Victim Support deal with standard risk referrals in Lancaster, Chorley and South Ribble.
- There is no formal route for standard risk cases; service provision would be improved if there was.
- The new commissioning approach will ensure that the service is comprehensive, holistic and integrated. It will also simplify and streamline processes which the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) has sometimes struggled to deal with effectively.
- Letgo support victims through any criminal processes which involve the perpetrator.
- Letgo have run two Freedom Programmes in the past twelve months, with 24 women completing the course, and they are currently (November 2016) running the follow-on course, Recovery Toolkit, which is specific to Wyre.
- Letgo works with GPs and the Royal Lancaster Infirmary increasingly successfully.
- A Peer Mentoring Programme has been run for eight women.
- Letgo deal with all male victim referrals, although the numbers are small in comparison to females
- Letgo make contact with high risk referrals within 48 hours, according to the guidelines. Most of those contacts are by phone. There are many benefits of telephone rather than face-to-face contact including geography, safety, anonymity, it is less threatening and contacts can be made more frequently. Face-to-face meetings take place if necessary.
- For high risk cases the same worker remains involved in order to provide consistency, until such time as outreach or groupwork become more appropriate methods.
- Letgo do not receive many requests for a place in a refuge; most people who Letgo deal with want to move permanently if they move at all.

- Housing availability depends very much on the local allocation policy, which varies from authority to authority.

Regarding preventative initiatives it was agreed that greater focus on schools would be desirable. More preventative work has been undertaken in Cumbria than in Lancashire because it had been commissioned.

Developing awareness and skills in local communities is essential and key local figures are instrumental in successful prevention. Elected members could play a much more significant role; task group members highlighted the need for training to be offered to councillors.

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Summary of Evidence from Mark Broadhurst (Service Director Health and Wellbeing) and Pamela Holroyd (Housing Options Team Leader)

Mark Broadhurst (Service Director Health and Wellbeing) and Pamela Holroyd (Housing Options Team Leader) presented an overview of the council's homeless duty with particular reference to domestic abuse.

Local authorities must consider applicants for housing assistance under the Housing Act 1996. A person could be statutorily homeless if they had accommodation but it was not reasonable for them to continue to occupy the accommodation, even in the short-term, because of the probability of threats of domestic or other violence, including threatening behaviour or abuse, be it psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional.

Under the Homelessness Act 2002 a housing authority takes into account the following factors:

- The nature of the violence or threats of violence, and
- The impact and likely effects of the violence on the applicant's current and future wellbeing

In 2015-16 thirty-two households who were deemed to be homeless as a result of domestic abuse, approached the council. Of the thirty-two:

- 12 were single females; 1 was a single male
- 7 were provided with emergency accommodation by the council
- 4 of those accommodated utilised specialist domestic abuse accommodation
- 7 returned home or remained where they were or failed to engage
- 18 remained with family and friends until alternative accommodation was obtained within social or private sector housing, with the support or financial assistance of the Housing Options Team

The council refers households to other agencies in a number of different circumstances and can assist directly in certain cases:

- High risk cases are referred to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)
- Those in need of emotional or financial support are referred to other appropriate services
- Some people are referred to the Sanctuary Scheme for works to be conducted within their own home (locks, mobile phones, security, etc.)
- It is possible for the council to assist financially and with the removal and storage of furnishings in appropriate cases.
- Travel warrants can be provided to facilitate households moving to secure, safe accommodation within a refuge or with family.
- The council can provide and financially support placements in emergency accommodation and refer households to supported, private sector and social housing accommodation, with funding.
- Households can be allocated to Band A on the housing waiting list in order that they are rehoused as a priority.

The Housing Options Team ensure that a full wrap-around service is delivered.

In response to questions from councillors the following additional points were made:

- There is a budget for preventative work for people with a variety of needs, domestic abuse also coming under that heading
- Faith groups and third sector organisations often assist with the provision of furniture, fridges, etc.
- Integrated Care Co-ordinators promote links between different organisations; Wyre views them as a gateway to services
- A Fylde-wide bid is being made to the DCLG for provision for people with complex needs, the bid to be submitted by 16 December 2016

The task group concluded that the Housing Options Team provides an excellent service to customers.

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Summary of Evidence from Fylde and Wyre Clinical Commissioning Group

Councillor Wilson, on behalf of the task group, met with three members of the Fylde and Wyre Clinical Commissioning Group: Dr Kath Greenwood, Domestic Abuse Lead, Alison Taylor, Named Professional Safeguarding Children & Primary Care and Amanda Bate, Community Engagement Manager.

GPs do identify some domestic abuse cases and refer them on appropriately, although they probably do not identify as many as they would like. There are several reasons for this; appointments are short and generally relatively infrequent, so trust is difficult to build up on that basis. It is also often difficult to make a 'safe enquiry' as patients do not always attend appointments on their own.

Dr Greenwood referred to the Identification and Referral to Improve Safety (IRIS) initiative, a training project in which IDVAs work closely with GPs. Within the programme, which was implemented in Bristol and Hackney, appointments were offered to women who disclosed domestic abuse at GP practices. The women were encouraged to attend further appointments at the practice, rather than being referred to another organisation, as they felt safe returning to somewhere that they already knew rather than having to attend at a different office. There was evidence that in areas where IRIS was working the number of referrals had increased greatly.

Although an interesting initiative, IRIS is not currently commissioned in Fylde and Wyre. IRIS has not been fully costed to date, although it was likely that it would provide excellent value for money through savings in mental health, accident and emergency and other health services.

The following additional points were made by the CCG representatives:

- GPs often sign-post people to Fylde Coast Women's Aid
- The CCG ensures that any change to service provider is communicated to GPs (as will be the case with the newly commissioned service from 1 April 2017)
- The Safeguarding Leads Forum includes representatives from every GP practice and has discussed domestic abuse at one of its bi-monthly meetings
- Fylde & Wyre CCG is a very active member of the MARAC
- The CCG is developing a domestic abuse policy for all its GP practices
- The CCG's newsletters have included information on domestic abuse; they can be viewed on the CCG's website
- The CCG is undertaking a review of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) which includes input from schools; the Communications Team works increasingly with children and young people
- The CCG has been very active in care homes, through their adult safeguarding officer
- Champions from care homes meet regularly to share information and best practice

The task group invited all four of the Clinical Commissioning Groups that cover parts of the borough to contribute to the review.

Councillors appreciate the time given to the review by the Fylde and Wyre CCG, which covers the largest part of the borough.

Of the others, Blackpool CCG and Greater Preston CCG both responded to the invitation, but made the comment that, in their opinion, their views could very effectively be put forward by representatives from the Fylde and Wyre CCG as the issues were likely to be very similar. No response was received from the Lancashire North CCG.

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Conclusions and recommendations

1. The current provision of domestic abuse services in Wyre, and indeed across the whole of Lancashire, is complex with a large number of organisations involved, some commissioned by Lancashire County Council and some not.
2. The newly commissioned domestic abuse service, which will be part of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner's statutory responsibility to deliver victim services with effect from 1 April 2015, will provide a fully integrated service that is streamlined and without duplication, which the task group welcomes.
3. Although there are obvious limitations to the influence that any one district council can have, the task group is clear that the newly commissioned service provider must be accountable to all parties who contribute funding and there is an expectation that representation will be more effective than it has been hitherto.

RECOMMENDATION ONE

That steps be taken by the council's representative on the Police and Crime Panel and/or the Portfolio Holder and officers of the council to make representations to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to ensure that the views of Wyre Council, as a recognised stakeholder, are taken into account throughout the process of performance monitoring of the newly commissioned service.

4. Increasing public awareness about domestic abuse remains the joint responsibility of all organisations involved in delivering services, including Wyre Council.

The task group was surprised and disappointed that only one male councillor took part in this review, particularly as 54% of Wyre's councillors are men.

The role of councillors is especially relevant in the light of the part they will play in the new 'Together We Make a Difference' initiative, with the vision "*to be a Collaborative Council that works together with local communities and partners to make a difference and improve the lives of those who live in, work in or visit the Borough.*"

The White Ribbon Campaign has been promoted with some effect, but there is more that Wyre can do, without cost, to increase awareness about domestic abuse issues both within the council and across the borough.

RECOMMENDATION TWO

That all councillors be offered and encouraged to take part in domestic abuse training, to be delivered by the end of March 2018.

RECOMMENDATION THREE

That the Council continues to support and promote the annual White Ribbon Campaign.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR

That the Council appoints two councillors and two officers as Domestic Abuse Champions.

5. The newly commissioned service will commence on 1 April 2017. The task group takes the view that the council should actively monitor the effectiveness of the new arrangements over the first year in particular, making sure that the best interests of Wyre residents are achieved.

RECOMMENDATION FIVE

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receives a briefing report, preferably specific to the Wyre Council area, from the council's representative on the Police and Crime Panel or the Portfolio Holder about the newly commissioned service at the beginning of the 2018/19 Municipal Year.

RECOMMENDATION SIX

That the report from the council's representative on the Police and Crime Panel or the Portfolio Holder's to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the beginning of the 2018/19 Municipal Year includes comments about the implementation of each of the task group's recommendations that has been supported by the Cabinet.

Councillors' Attendances

There were nine full meetings of the task group.

Name	Meetings attended (maximum 9)
Councillor M Anderton	8
Councillor Lady Atkins	6
Councillor B Birch	7
Councillor Reeves	7
Councillor Robinson	6
Councillor Smith	7
Councillor Wilson	9

In addition to the above, Councillor Wilson represented the task group at a meeting with the Fylde and Wyre Clinical Commissioning Group on Tuesday 13 December 2016.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1

Domestic Abuse Task Group – Scoping Document - FINAL

DRAFT

22 February 2017

Domestic Abuse Task Group - Scoping Document - FINAL

Review Topic	Domestic abuse	
Chairman	Councillor Natalie Reeves	
Group Membership	Councillors Marge Anderton, Lady Dulcie Atkins, Howard Ballard, Barry Birch, Julie Robinson, Christine Smith and Val Wilson	
Officer Support	Peter Foulsham, Scrutiny Officer	
Purpose of the Review	To review the current provision for domestic abuse services in Wyre and to make recommendations for improvements that could affect Wyre residents.	
Role of Overview and Scrutiny in this Review (mark all that apply)	Holding Executive to account – decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Existing budget and policy framework	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Contribution to policy development (See 'Scope of Review', below)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Holding Executive to account – performance	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Community champion	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Statutory duties / compliance with codes of practice	<input type="checkbox"/>
Aims of Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To understand the funding arrangements for domestic abuse in Lancashire and Wyre ○ To understand the use of domestic abuse services in Wyre ○ To identify gaps in services ○ To consider the impact of potential closures of services, including refuges on the residents of Wyre ○ To review the effectiveness of communication between partner agencies and to make recommendations 	
Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consideration of documents, reports and performance statistics ○ Interviewing witnesses at meetings ○ Considering anonymised case examples 	
Scope of Review	<p>Noting that services for domestic abuse are primarily the responsibility of Lancashire County Council and not Wyre Council, the review will not focus on other closely related services, including mental health, children's services or education, for example.</p> <p>The focus will be solely on the delivery of the primary domestic abuse service in Lancashire.</p>	

Potential Witnesses	<p>Wyre Council officers Resources Portfolio Holder Lancashire County Council officers Fylde Women's Aid Letgo Lancashire Constabulary Regenda Citizens Advice Bureau</p> <p>The task group also needs to cover the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Wyre's housing responsibilities, and (ii) CCG's view
Documents to be considered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Pan-Lancashire Domestic Abuse Strategy • Domestic Abuse Strategy and Pan-Lancashire Strategic Domestic Abuse Board – report to Lancashire Chief Executives meeting, 20 May 2016 • Overview of domestic abuse/violence services within Wyre District – 2 February 2016 – Jane Murray (Community Safety Officer)
Risks	
Level of Publicity	Low
Indicators of a Successful Review	
Intended Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement to services • More efficient use of domestic abuse funding • Wyre councillors having better understanding of domestic abuse arrangements in Lancashire • Improved communication between partners • Identification of alternative solutions within the context of the current funding cuts
Approximate Timeframe	Aim to complete by end of October 2016.
Projected Start Date	July 2016