

Report for: Adults and Health Scrutiny Panel

Date: 17th November 2020

Title: Briefing: Domestic Abuse - Haringey's Response

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Ward(s) affected: All

**Report for Key/
Non Key Decision:** Non-Key

1. Describe the issue under consideration

Domestic Abuse

- 1.1 The Overview Scrutiny Committee was informed in June that domestic abuse reports have increased by 30-35%. With the risk of domestic abuse heightened by lockdown measures, what action has the Council been taking to support people affected by domestic abuse and how is the Council working with partners in this area?
- 1.2 What plans are in place to help support potential victims of domestic abuse in the event of a second lockdown?
- 1.3 How is the domestic abuse work carried out by Adult Services being coordinated with Children's Services? How does this work fit with the governance of the wider safeguarding approach in Haringey?

This briefing provides an overview of changes made to the delivery of domestic abuse services following the implementation of lockdown arrangements by government, on 23 March 2020, in response to the COVID-19 (C-19) pandemic. It also describes work currently being undertaken in terms of planning for a second wave.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

N/A.

3. Recommendations

That the panel note:

- a) Changes in service delivery within Public Health made during lockdown in response to the C-19 pandemic.
- b) How performance and risk have been monitored and managed during this period.
- c) How Public Health is building on lessons learnt and positive changes made during lockdown and planning for a potential second wave.

4. Reasons for decision

N/A (*report is for information*).

5. Alternative options considered

N/A (*report is for information*).

6. Background information

a) Overview – Approach to Domestic Abuse Service Delivery During Lockdown

6.1 Domestic Abuse

The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is: any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, 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. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

- psychological
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

A new offence of coercive and controlling behaviour in intimate and familial relationships was introduced into the Serious Crime Act 2015.

6.2 National Picture

The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent upsurge in victims looking for support has created a new and more urgent focus on the needs of victims and survivors of domestic abuse.

2.4 million people are victims of domestic abuse each year and the costs of domestic abuse amount to £66bn according to the Government's own figures for victims identified in the Crime Survey of England and Wales for the year ending March 2017.

(Reference Safelives Report - A Safe Fund: costing domestic abuse provision for the whole family 2020)

The pressure that the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown measures have placed on frontline domestic abuse services, both accommodation and

community based, has been immense. Lockdown has seen an increase in calls to the English and Welsh national domestic abuse helplines for victims, the rising use of Women's Aid's online support tool and increases in calls and messages to the Respect perpetrator phone line and website, as well as an increase in NSPCC calls from children who are experiencing domestic abuse at home.

Refuge, who provide the national England helpline service had reported that the number of callers to their service had increased during lockdown. The lockdown itself did not cause domestic abuse but could have aggravated pre-existing behaviours in an abusive relationship. It has been agreed that it is difficult to assess whether this demand is driven by the increased prevalence of domestic abuse in communities or by an increased awareness for support.

Refuge cited that the

- National Domestic Abuse Helpline statistics showed call volumes week beginning 14th September 2020 were 42% higher than pre-Covid averages
- The Web traffic was consistently higher than pre-Covid levels

Women's Aid

Women's Aid gathered national data which examined the impact of the pandemic on survivors of domestic abuse.

76.1% of survivors are having to spend more time with their abuser.

67.4% reported that the abuse had got worse during lockdown.

71.7% of women reported that their abuser had used the pandemic as way to further abuse them (e.g. making them feel guilty for the financial impact on their household or humiliated for being worried about the virus).

78.3% of survivors reported that the lockdown had made it harder for them to leave their abuser.

6.3 Domestic Abuse Bill

Simultaneously and coincidentally the Domestic Abuse (DA) Bill is currently going through Parliament, it was originally drafted in 2019. Some of the ongoing consultations are around the following issues:

- Black and Ethnic Minority Ethnic (BAME) & Migrant victims & survivors
- Disability
- Children
- Multi-agency working
- Criminal Justice response
- Health & Housing response
- LGBTQ+

One of the significant areas, if the Domestic Abuse Bill passes in Parliament, is that Councils may get an extra £6m to fulfil new duties, including providing safe accommodation and support for Domestic Abuse victims from the Ministry for Housing, Local Communities and Government (MHCLG). If approved, then

London Councils will coordinate a consultation with councils to support them on their new obligations. The Maximum Haringey Council could receive, if approved will be £50,000.

Haringey Council has acquired a new property site so this could potentially lead to the development of extra refuge spaces, if the law is passed and extra funding is received.

The Domestic Abuse Bill also has a number of other new proposed changes, some of which include:

- the introduction of the legal recognition of emotional control in the Domestic Abuse definition,
- prohibiting perpetrators to cross examine victims in person in court
- giving priority housing to homeless victims of domestic abuse.

7. Escalation and facilitation of domestic abuse and abusive behaviour during Lockdown

There was a widespread recognition that Domestic Abuse victims during lockdown would experience additional barriers to reporting. This included self-isolation and restricted movement, which meant that survivors were trapped at home for prolonged periods of time with their perpetrators and that they were less likely able to safely contact others or call for help.

Abusers may have felt emboldened by the fact that public services were stretched so encouraged them to threaten or enact additional abuse and violence. The crisis may have elevated the level of stress in a household, which itself may have led to more abuse and violence. This could be because of illness, isolation, job losses/insecurity, financial worries, having children/family members at home all day or not having the usual social and leisure activities to diffuse stress. Health fears may have been used as a coercive/abusive tool. For example, abusers may have used threats of infection to control behaviour (e.g. by withholding cleaning supplies), enforce unnecessary isolation restrictions using health as a justification, or threaten to throw victims out of the house if they got ill. This is part of coercive control under domestic abuse and is illegal.

Equally victims may have felt fearful of trying to change hygiene behaviour in the household. Those experiencing abuse may have felt less able to safely leave an abusive setting than usual, because of fears over job status, accessing benefits or sick pay, housing status, and the risk of removing children with nowhere to take them if family/friends were self-isolating and refuges were stretched.

Mental health may have suffered due to feeling trapped, additional abuse experienced, loneliness, illness and lack of formal and informal support as well as maybe not knowing where the DA support services and networks were, or if they were still operating.

Custody issues, already commonly used as a controlling tool by abusers, may have been even more complex because of self-isolation, infection and health fears. The usual channels of recourse – lawyers, the courts, the police – may have been affected by staff shortages and the limitations of remote working. The courts were also initially closed, so if there were family matters or DA offences, these cases could not be heard, delaying options.

Refuges may experience staff and resource shortages due to illness and social distancing limitations, as well as a lack of space if some residents need to self-isolate.

Those without recourse to public funds, such as those with irregular migration status and asylum seekers, had a particularly challenging time leaving abusive settings. This has been exacerbated by COVID and perpetrators exploiting this situation. Fear of being deported has led to a lack of reaching out and seeking help from support services and the police. However, a new national refuge was established with Southall Black Sisters (SBS) and Solace to operate a new refuge for women with no recourse (this became full immediately 70 spaces)

8. Signs missed

While children were out of school, non-essential medical appointments were postponed and other social contact was absent, signs of abuse may have been missed at these times.

The usual visits by social services to children and others in at-risk settings were at first postponed, cancelled or became less frequent due to infection concerns, and the quality of interaction may have been lower if in-person visits are not possible. A COVID team was established by Children's services and they went through closed DA cases and contacted these families who were previously known to them.

9. Haringey Picture

9.1 Police

There has been a recorded disparity in the numbers of DA cases being recorded by the police across the country.

In relation to Haringey's Borough Command Unit (BCU) in the police, which includes Enfield and Haringey. The reported cases of DA data could not be separated between the boroughs, hence the 35% was for the two boroughs, however, the police had advised that there had actually been a bigger increase in Enfield. We do not have figures just for Haringey.

This could possibly be due to the following reasons?

If an incident was not obviously a domestic abuse incident, i.e. an assault, it might not have been flagged as domestic abuse. Or coercive control, which

became a criminal offence on 2015 might not have been recognised, when the abuser uses non-violent methods such as intimidation and humiliation to deprive their victim of independence.

We contacted Enfield Council to establish if they had put in place support/initiatives that we had not considered, but this was not the case. They had however had a domestic abuse homicide in the borough, which was reported, this may have possibly encouraged victims to seek support for themselves, hence an increase in reported numbers to Enfield?

The sector knew that ordinarily underreporting was already a major issue for DA and VAWG clients and we were aware that it would become increasingly more difficult and dangerous for women to make reports whilst they are stuck at home with their abusers. Additionally, individuals who were not already known to our services may have less opportunities in isolation to become aware of the support available.

We were very aware of the additional barriers that the BAME community, LGBTQi, Men, People with disabilities, those with complex needs including mental health and substance misuse, older people, those with immigration and housing concerns would be experiencing on top of the DA/VAWG situation.

Whilst the government was encouraging social distancing, face to face appointments were limited as much as possible, frontline domestic abuse services were adapted to continue over the phone and online. None of the services stopped operating and we developed a Business Continuity Plan with all of the providers. The Council and the VAWG Team led upon and set in place a train of initiatives in motion immediately, to address these concerns.

9.2 Haringey's services

Referrals continued to all Haringey Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Domestic Abuse providers as normal and they were picked up and contacted immediately.

The domestic abuse services included;

Hearthstone who provide case work support on all levels of risk, **Nia** who provide the high risk Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy Service (IDVA) and the IRIS service, which is support for General Practices (GPs). **Solace** who provide the medium/standard risk support via their Floating Support Services. The Domestic Violence Intervention Project (**DVIP**) who deliver the perpetrator services. They were unable to continue their service due to the level of risk. This contract ended 31st October 2020 but interim arrangements have been put in place to support perpetrators in DA.

The refuges provided by Solace were already full (15 bed spaces) and this became a national issue and concern. There were some provisions made for emergency accommodation and the Ministry for Housing, Local Communities and Government (MHCLG) provided additional resources such as hotel accommodation.

We commissioned the London Black Women's Project (LBWP) to provide 4 single BME refuge spaces, which is due to open soon. So in Haringey we will have a total of 19 refuge spaces.

All services were trying to adapt to the new guidance and circumstances to try and slow the spread of coronavirus while continuing to provide the fullest support possible. We worked tightly as professionals to make this process run as smoothly as possible.

9.3 Adults and Children's Safeguarding

In relation to the approach of understanding safeguarding within Adults and Childrens, there is a clear process in place.

In any case where a vulnerable person is suspected of being a victim of domestic abuse this would be raised with the adult safeguarding team. In cases where there is a child under the age of 18 in the property then the safeguarding team would automatically make contact with the children services. There is a specific local protocol that Children Safeguarding Care adopts the PAN London Child Protection procedures, this covers the need to consider and give weight to working jointly with Adults on identified need. Adults staff would follow the Association of Directors for Adults Services (ADASS) London Multi-Agency Safeguarding Policy and Procedures which provides specific guidance on the interaction between adult and children safeguarding in such cases. Additionally, it should be noted that the number of vulnerable adults who we support who have a child under the age of 18 is very low. Current data shows that this represents just 2% of the adults social care population.

Children's and Adults' social care understand that children and young people living with domestic abuse are a matter for concern in our community and require a co-ordinated and collaborative response across partner agencies recognising the three central imperatives of any intervention for children living with domestic abuse are:

1. To protect the child/ren;
2. To support the victims/survivors to assist them to protect themselves and their child/ren; and
3. To hold the abusive partner accountable for the violence/abuse and provide them with opportunities to change

Adults and Children's share commonalities in relation to:

Culture and women: the culture amongst some communities means that it is often more difficult for women to admit to having relationship problems as a fault based culture means that many females , are blamed for letting the family down. The joint work to develop the VAWG relies on both adults and children's safeguarding partners viewing the risks of coercion, control and oppression to the whole family. Both safeguarding boards have raised the profile of the

learning available to the partners to ensure signs of DA are identified earlier and the resilience amongst partner agencies to intervene and refer is strengthened.

Immigration status: children and their parent experiencing domestic abuse may have an uncertain immigration status, which could prevent them from accessing services. The parent experiencing DA may also be hesitant to take action against their partner for fear of losing their right to remain in the UK. In some cases, the parent experiencing abuse has received threats of deportation from their partner or extended family if they report domestic violence. The engagement of local community resources and working through the MARAC ensures support is provided to both adults and children to address the immigration challenges and signpost to appropriate services.

Language / literacy: children and their abused parent may face an additional challenge to engaging with services if English is not their first language. Adults and Children's have worked with the commissioned interpretation service to ensure that a wider range of interpreters are available and that the learning and training programmes from VAWG are accessible to the provider. Both services are committed to the principles of not using family members or friends, and avoid wherever possible relying on members of the known community.

Temporary accommodation: When a family moves frequently, they may be facing chronic poverty, social isolation, racism or other forms of discrimination and the problems associated with living in disadvantaged areas or in temporary accommodation. These families can become disengaged from, or may have not been able to become engaged with, health, education, social care, welfare and personal social support systems. Through Homes4Haringey families can be signposted to the Children's Social Care MASH and Adults to ensure they are provided with relevant information to ensure their ability to access education for their children and help in the adults own right is an embedded part of our response and welcome to the borough.

10. These were the proactive steps that Haringey Council took when Lockdown happened; on addressing the issue of domestic violence exacerbated by self-isolation.

This was a tense time for many people, and even more for adults and children, in abusive households. Haringey Council prioritised VAWG and worked hard with our trusted partners to ensure that we were fully equipped to identify and support residents who needed help.

This has still continued to be a high priority for Haringey Council even while public services have experienced enormous strain in dealing with the immediate effects of Covid-19.

Discussions have been taking place with Central Government to ensure that refuges, community organisations and charities receive adequate funding to

maintain their services and protective equipment if necessary. This is still ongoing. There have been some positive areas of work but in other areas there have been massive delays. These include, delays in benefits so even if a client is in a refuge she has no funds, there have been delays in organisations receiving funds from central government and IT support and equipment has been an issue for some organisations who do not have the necessary equipment to work remotely.

10.1 Supporting VAWG Commissioned Services

The Council's immediate concern in response to the initial lockdown measures which began in March 2020, was to ensure that all of our commissioned services were able to continue running their services in a way that ensured the utmost safety both for service users and staff members.

The VAWG Team supported our commissioned services through the transition to working remotely and continues to liaise with services about their ongoing needs. The Haringey IDVA and Floating Support services have successfully transitioned to operating online and over the phone so that Haringey survivors are still able to access these core services, including the Haringey Domestic Abuse Helpline. The Haringey MARAC has also transitioned to an online format which continues to meet over Microsoft Teams every three weeks. Since the lockdown, the VAWG Team have been reviewing each of the cases ahead of the MARAC meeting to ensure not only that the proposed actions for each case are meeting the needs of the survivors and holding perpetrators to account, but also to monitor any ongoing changes in risk, gaps, or barriers which are emerging as a result of the pandemic. MARAC training was also introduced.

Our Haringey refuges have remained fully operational throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and the council ensured that staff were provided with sufficient PPE so that they are able to work safely and continue to support refuge residents. It was brought to the council's attention that the families living in the Haringey council's commissioned refuge found it challenging to maintain social distancing and strictly follow stay at home guidance due to the nature of living in a refuge and sharing space with multiple families as well as the need to leave the refuge routinely to purchase food and essentials. In response to this, the VAWG Team was able to arrange for each family in the refuge to receive a weekly food and essentials delivery as part of the council's emergency food parcel delivery scheme. The refuge residents reported that this made a significant impact on their personal safety and emotional wellbeing.

10.2 Increasing Communications

The Council is aware that the lockdown measures have created additional barriers to survivors accessing support and have made it more difficult for women to get information about how to seek help for the abuse they are experiencing. The VAWG Team have responded to this by increasing our communications and including specific messaging around COVID-19 which made clear that VAWG services in the borough are still operating and provided the details for how to get support via the Haringey Domestic Abuse Helpline. In

this messaging we included an email address which survivors could access in case speaking on the phone could put them at risk in the home. We also included information about the '55 Silent Method' which survivors could use in the event they needed to phone the police but were unable to speak. The VAWG Team created an infographic which was circulated on social media, on the council's website, in the Haringey resident's online newsletter, and in the Haringey VAWG online Newsletter. We also created guidance for Haringey residents who might be worried about friends, family, or neighbours experiencing abuse and this was shared across communities in Haringey by the Bridge Renewal Trust via their online newsletter and website.

The VAWG Team also recognise that many victims experiencing abuse at home may be experiencing digital exclusion and/or have their access to media monitored by their perpetrator which means that they would not be able to see these online messages. In one attempt to address this, the VAWG Team liaised with the Council's Emergency Food Response team to get some discreet messaging sent out along with the food parcels which were being delivered to thousands of homes across the borough. We worked with Haringey Council's Communications team to design a recipe card to match the contents of the food parcel and on the back of the recipe card we included three key helplines, including the Haringey Domestic Abuse Helpline. Haringey Council's Communications Team also supported us to include our Domestic Abuse COVID-19 infographic in the printed magazine which is circulated to Haringey residents. We also liaised with the Tottenham Community Press who included the Haringey Domestic Abuse Helpline in their printed publications.

As we are also aware that unfortunately the reality is that many of our own staff members are likely to be experiencing domestic abuse, the VAWG Team increased messaging directed at staff members which signposted them to Haringey Council's Domestic Abuse Policy for Staff Members. This was communicated on our Haringey Council VAWG intranet pages, verbally in a Let's Talk Session for Adults as well as in a video shared with all staff members via the Chief Executive's weekly updates.

10.3 Coordinated Community Response (CCR) Webinar

Due to the lockdown measures, the opportunities for victims to seek support and access services have been seriously reduced. Each interaction a survivor has with a service whether it is a Children Centre or Food Bank could be one of the only chances that a survivor has to get support. The VAWG Team recognise that a coordinated community response is now more important than ever so that all statutory, non-statutory, and community services are working together holistically and are trained to recognise signs of abuse and respond safely to disclosures. The VAWG Team have designed a two-hour webinar which is available for free to all Haringey practitioners and community members. This has been delivered regularly since March and we have trained 130+ practitioners including faith leaders, social workers, mental health practitioners, Haringey Adults Learning Service, teachers, etc.

10.4 VAWG & Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority (BAME) Community Forum

Domestic Abuse in Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority communities emerged as a key concern following a meeting co-hosted by Haringey Council and the Bridge Renewal Trust about the disproportionate effects of COVID-19 on Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority communities. In response to these concerns, the VAWG Team organised a VAWG and BAME Community Forum which was attended by 30 representatives from specialist VAWG BAME services, BAME specific community services, and other services which work with BAME women. The Forum provided an opportunity for representatives to discuss barriers and solutions facing BAME women experiencing VAWG and how this has been further impacted by COVID-19. A number of key recommendations were made by the representatives around funding and resources, communications and messaging, community capacity building, and partnership working. The VAWG Team will present this information to the Health and Wellbeing Board and are also incorporating this feedback into future commissioning plans, as well as the pilot for our Coordinated Community Response to end VAWG in Haringey.

10.4 In addition, other steps that were taken

- a) We provided PPE equipment for staff in Haringey's refuges.
- b) We set in motion to support the local providers to function efficiently and adapt to fully functioning online and over the phone. All of our DA and VAWG services continued to provide support and accept referrals as normal.
- c) It was agreed that for ease there was one point of telephone contact for ALL clients and professionals in Haringey seeking DA support, advice and information. This was the NIA helpline number. In addition to our Haringey Helpline Phone number, we provided an email option for women who could not safely speak on the phone.
- d) We held regular meetings with all of our DA providers, including a VAWG Recovery and Renewal workshop and have cite of their Business Continuity Plans.
- e) We gave the police discreet merchandise on DA to give out to all victims where they were called out to all DA incidents.
- f) We developed a recipe card with DA service information on the back, that went into every food parcel that was distributed.
- g) We developed a DA guidance briefing for all Councillors/elected members and MPs on the signs they should be looking out for and how these concerns should be escalated within Haringey containing all of the relevant information

on DA services, what DA is and how to support residents if they were approached.

- h) We are also extending this CCR training to pharmacists, to also support victims and perpetrators. The training date has yet to be confirmed, but in essence, people can go in to get regular medicines, repeats, may have substance misuse/mental health and other issues, and DA may also be a factor. This is a good opportunity to identify potential victims.
- i) A clear referral pathway flow chart was developed to support all agencies on where/how to make referrals.
- j) The VAWG Team recognise that victims from BAMER and Migrant communities experience additional challenges in relation to VAWG and that while these existed long before COVID-19, these have been further exacerbated in the current climate. We recognised that specialist organisations supporting BAMER women and girls had been experiencing additional obstacles. We are proposing in our future commissioning plans to include specialist services, in the interim we have galvanised support from a whole range of specialist services willing to support clients and cases going forward. We also met with some male representatives to address the issue of male victims and MANKIND is a valued partner in supporting cases.
- k) We delivered a virtual 'Let's Talk session' for Adults and Health staff on VAWG.
- l) We produced a VAWG video and shared information that was available on the intranet for all staff to access and a regular information VAWG newsletter that anyone can sign up to receive via;

VAWG@haringey.gov.uk

- m) We worked with the Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime/VAWG team and receive regular reports from the National DA commissioner to advise all of the boroughs on changes that we might need to consider going forward.

11. Haringey Data on Domestic Abuse

11.1 Met Police

The Met Police North Area (BCU is Enfield and Haringey) data shows a sharp increase in both non-crime domestic call-outs and substantive offences.

Non-crime domestic call-outs are incidents where the police are called (either by the victim or perpetrator or by a third party) but on police arrival, no offences are alleged or apparent and therefore it is not possible to take any further action. Substantive offences occur when an allegation is substantiated (through evidence at the scene or victim or witness statements) and the police are able to commence an investigation.

The total number of call-outs during this period was **6926** and the average call outs was around 989 per month. This average is 11.17% higher than the average for the four months preceding lockdown, November 2019 to February 2020. This is in relation to non-crime domestic calls, from November 2019 – February 2020, which the average number was 890.

There is a clear month-on-month increase in 2020, as follows:

March:	797
April:	876
May:	996
June:	1091
July:	1043
August:	1069
September:	1054

In relation to substantive offences, for October 2019 – February 2020, the average was 486. There was a less pronounced month-on-month increase, but nonetheless the trend was still evident as follows:

March:	535
April:	593
May:	625
June:	637
July:	635
August:	699
September:	637

The total number of substantive offences during this period was **4361** and the average was 623. This average is 28.08% higher than the average for the five months preceding lockdown, which is October 2019 to February 2020.

In relation to crimes and reports to the police, there has been an increase of DA homicides (14 known reported so far, nationally). The police have been dealing with a whole range of crimes/homicides and DA is just one aspect of their work and Haringey Council needs to ensure that DA is still dealt with as a high priority by the police. The continued usage and promotion of 'Clare's Law' where a new partner's history can be shared (the request has to be approved by the police), if DA was an issue can be widely promoted.

11.2 Children and Young People's Services (CYPS)

Haringey Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) manage cases where children may be at risk of significant harm due to the parental domestic abuse.

The majority of their referrals come from the police. There was an increase in children needing Child protection plans as a result of the severity of DA. CYPS also provided data comparing 2019 to 2020 which allowed analysis of whether there had been an increase in domestic abuse cases during lockdown. The results were as follows:

March 2019 18 referrals and 33 referrals March 2020	=	increase
April 2019 12 referrals and 27 referrals April 2020	=	increase
May 2019 29 referrals and 28 referrals May 2020	=	decrease
June 2019 13 referrals and 48 referrals June 2020	=	increase
July 2019 15 referrals and 58 referrals July 2020	=	increase
August 2019 13 referrals and 39 referrals August 2020	=	increase
September 2019 15 referrals and 33 referrals September 2020	=	increase

11.3 Safeguarding Adults Services (SA)

Haringey Safeguarding Adults (SA) team manage cases where vulnerable adults (i.e. those with a mental health condition, learning disability etc.) may be at risk of significant harm due to domestic abuse.

Any concerns relating to domestic abuse for vulnerable adults would be managed through their safeguarding framework in line with statutory guidance (Care Act 2014).

Safeguarding means protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect, while at the same time making sure that the adult's wellbeing is promoted including, where appropriate, having regard to their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs in deciding on any action. This must recognise that adults sometimes have complex interpersonal relationships and may be ambivalent, unclear or unrealistic about their personal circumstances.

The majority of their referrals come from the police. All SA referrals have increased by 27% as compared to the same period in 2019.

There were **141** domestic abuse referrals for March 2020 – September 2020, which accounts for 11.5% of SA referrals for this period.

In one third of cases, the perpetrator was a family member, and in the remaining two thirds was a partner or ex-partner. The majority of incidents were physical followed by emotional abuse. There was a rise in the number of financial abuse incidents also, which may be a result of financial strain caused by the pandemic.

12. Domestic Abuse Commissioned Services

All specialist services commissioned by Haringey Council have reported increased levels of risk, complexity and severity at the point of receiving referrals during lockdown.

12.1 Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA)

The Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) service offers support to women experiencing domestic abuse who are at a high risk of serious harm or homicide. The IDVA service provided data which allowed a comparison of referrals from 2019 to the same time period in 2020. The IDVA service reported an increase in severity and frequency of abusive incidents. 19% of their clients were struggling financially due to the pandemic, and 18% were unable to move to a place of safety. Clients generally have found it more difficult to access services.

In quarter 1 of 2019, they received **69** referrals and in quarter 1 of 2020 this was **99** which is an increase

In quarter 2 of 2019, they received **84** referrals. This increased to **115** in quarter 2 of 2020.

12.2 IRIS

The IRIS service offers support to women experiencing domestic abuse who present to their GP. The IRIS service provided data which allowed a comparison of referrals from 2019 to the same time period in 2020.

The IRIS service reported that their clients had told them the lockdown had made it harder to leave the perpetrator, harder to get space from the perpetrator, caused an increase in childcare responsibilities, perpetrators have been using the pandemic as an excuse to further control the victim and that clients are reporting a decrease in emotional wellbeing.

In quarter 1 of 2019, they received **15** referrals. This increased to **18** in quarter 1 of 2020.

In quarter 2 of 2019, they received **17** referrals. This increased to **20** in quarter 2 of 2020.

12.3 Floating Support

The Floating Support service offers support to women experiencing domestic abuse who are at a medium and standard risk of serious harm or homicide. The Floating Support service provided data which allowed a comparison of referrals from 2019 to the same time period in 2020.

A manager at the Floating Support service reported, *"We have found that the pandemic has impacted on our service users mental and emotional well-being, they have been unable to access therapy due to long or closed waiting lists and case workers are providing more emotional support."*

In quarter 1 of 2019, they received 58 referrals. They also received **58** referrals in quarter 1 of 2020.

In quarter 2 of 2019, they received **51** referrals. This increased to **56** in quarter 2 of 2020.

12.4 Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

The Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is a meeting where all high-risk domestic abuse cases are discussed and actions to increase safety are agreed by multi agency partners. At the start of lockdown, the MARAC had to undergo a rapid transformation into a virtual format, resulting in a significant increase in workload.

The MARAC Coordinator reported, “the pandemic has impacted survivors by not allowing for a MARAC process that involves full conversation and dialogue regarding each case. Also some actions are simply not possible, especially those pertaining to survivors having access to group work support.”

The MARAC provided data which allowed a comparison of referrals from 2019 to the same time period in 2020.

In quarter 1 of 2019, they received **136** referrals. They received **131** referrals in quarter 1 of 2020.

In quarter 2 of 2019, they received **115** referrals. This increased to **122** in quarter 2 of 2020.

13. Areas at risk

Currently, there is a shortage of accommodation/refuge spaces and this is an area that is in discussion at the moment. If spaces do become available and referrals are accepted all staff will need access to protective equipment, testing, emergency food supplies for the women and children.

Many London organisations have written to Central Government to request additional funding. Including adopting the governments ‘Rough sleepers’ approach to be housed in hotels to extend to DA victims too, including those with insecure immigration status. Without financial support to be provided to these vulnerable clients.

These DA agencies are seeking an emergency financial package, to support their services, helplines, staffing and on line advice. Using existing council funds or the additional emergency government funding to provide financial support to refuges which may be experiencing elevated demand, staff shortages, a lack of protective equipment.

Domestic abuse service staff should be explicitly designated as key workers so they are able to continue their work.

Requests for funding have also been requested by these providers to Haringey Council, to fund extra staffing resources, in the event of a surge of cases when Lockdown eases.

The BAME community may need specific specialist VAWG services, including IDVA services and this is going to be considered in all future commissioning plans.

Women with no recourse and immigration issues need particular consideration and support.

14. The Way Forward and Future Planning

There is some fear if there is a second lockdown for DA victims but learning has taken place and we are better prepared and have a good infrastructure in place.

If lockdown happens, we have already an infrastructure in place that we can implement immediately. We can trigger a quick process with our partners to still function and improve the telephone/virtual offers.

When lockdown eases the DA providers have advised that they feel there may be a surge of callers and victims coming forward, they anticipate that there will be an increase in demand on DA services from residents, as there has been to the national services.

A comprehensive VAWG Business continuity action plan has been developed by the VAWG Team in the event of a further lockdown that will be used to continue to support our providers and residents. We will adopt the learning from the first lockdown and adjust it accordingly to continue to work in joint partnership to support residents, professionals, partner agencies and commissioned providers. As well as supporting staff who also maybe victims of DA, during lockdown **(see attached – Appendix A)**.

Central Government can play a vital role, in ensuring that there are adequate resources for agencies and victims, including adequate funding, which is fairly and equitably distributed, without the additional pressure of complicated funding application forms. They can also drive through the DA Bill quickly to support DA victims and duties assigned to local authorities can be put in motion.

15. Contribution to strategic outcomes

This contributes to the VAWG Strategy and the four objectives (2016-2026)

16. Statutory Officers comments (Chief Finance Officer (including procurement), Assistant Director of Corporate Governance, Equalities)

Finance

Changes since lockdown has created additional pressures above and beyond business as usual levels as Public Health has had to meet greater demand for VAWG services and expand it's capacity.

The materialisation of a second wave will bring renewed pressures in areas similar to those we have seen, which presents a financial risk going forward.

Procurement

The contents of this report are noted, there are no procurement implications.

Legal

There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in the report.

17. Equality

Any changes in service delivery, updated and new policies, within ASC and Public Health, will be subject to a full EQIA, in line with the Council's policy and statutory requirements.

18. Use of Appendices

Appendix A – Violence Against Women and Girls Team

19. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

N/A.