

<b>Cabinet Member for Safer, Stronger Communities</b>	<b>Ref No: SSC_13_1718</b>
<b>March 2018</b>	<b>Key Decision: Yes</b>
<b>Improving Domestic Abuse Prevention Services in West Sussex through Beacon Authority Status</b>	<b>Part I</b>
<b>Report by Executive Director Children Adults Families Health and Education and Director of Children's Services</b>	<b>Electoral Divisions: All</b>

## Summary

The County Council has an opportunity to test and apply some innovative preventative techniques for resolving Domestic Abuse as a Beacon authority under a national, three-year initiative coordinated by the charity SafeLives. The initiative is proposed to be equally funded by SafeLives and County Council funding. The County Council's own contribution can be achieved through the reassignment of existing resources for the victims of domestic abuse. This proposal strongly aligns with the [West Sussex Plan](#) for West Sussex to be a safe place, and is expected both to improve life prospects for children and families in their local communities, and to assist the authority to avoid future high-cost interventions where domestic abuse is indicated.

**Recommendation:** That the Cabinet Member approves:

- (1) the participation of the County Council as a Beacon authority in an initiative coordinated by the charity SafeLives; and
- (2) commitment of up to £280k per year from the County Council to support the initiative from 2018/19 to 2020/21.

## Proposal

### 1. Background and Context

- 1.1 In line with the [West Sussex Plan](#) ambition for a strong, safe and sustainable place, this proposal is intended to enhance and further strengthen its Domestic Abuse resolution services. It also furthers the policy aim that families and children should have a healthy family, home and work life. Accordingly there is a focus on developing resilient families, resilient communities, and ensuring that West Sussex is noted as a county where families can thrive and prosper.
- 1.2 In the case of Domestic Abuse in West Sussex, the previous emphasis has fallen primarily on working with victims of domestic abuse, for whom that abuse has already occurred. While this important work will continue, it is also desirable to engage more proactively to prevent such occurrences

through earlier intervention that helps the family unit to retain its integrity, and children to continue to develop in a safe environment. Retaining family integrity through a preventative approach can also mean the avoidance of later, more costly interventions, were the originating circumstances to escalate. West Sussex has a strong pedigree in effective working with Domestic Abuse cases, and this has led to the current opportunity to increase investment in this work area.

1.3 The Beacon programme has arisen due to perceived gaps nationally related to:

- limitations in the range of quality of services available for victims and their children, with significant unmet need;
- no consistent national response to perpetrators, with limited help or challenge to those perpetrating high risk abuse;
- gaps in support available across whole families, with insufficient opportunities for long term recovery and support.

The two intended Beacon Authorities nationally are West Sussex and Norfolk County Councils.

## 2. Proposal

2.1 This proposal is for the initiative to run over three financial years, becoming operational in July 2018, following a preparatory phase. The Beacon Site will provide a holistic package of support to those experiencing domestic abuse, offering a range of interventions to address their needs, and improve the response and the options available to agencies. The range of associated projects would include:

- **Connect** – piloting five interventions: Medium Risk, Staying Together, Complex Needs, Step Down and Recovery, Children and Young People.
- **One Front Door** – the SafeLives vision for the transformation of local systems, processes and multi-agency response to child and adult safeguarding concerns. The One Front Door provides a clear referral pathway for any safeguarding concern by any agency, member of the public, self-referral or friends and family members.
- **Drive** – a response to perpetrators of domestic abuse through working with them directly to challenge their behaviour and encourage change.

2.2 The preventative approach includes themes such as identifying domestic abuse earlier, helping couples to stay together safely and ensuring the needs of children and young people are met. It is anticipated that the work will yield benefits through reducing the number of more intensive interventions required, such as child protection plans. Through its concentration on an integrated approach (consolidated access to service, with a single family plan and support worker) the proposal aligns well with the operating model of the Council's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the Integrated Prevention and Earliest Help (IPEH) service's local Hub structure, established in 2017.

- 2.3 If this proposal is approved, the County Council will enter into a formal partnership agreement with SafeLives, as an equal partner. Under the agreement, SafeLives will contract with the Community & Voluntary sector for the delivery of work under this programme. The County Council's financial contribution will be formed by a combination of funding transfer to SafeLives and secondment of existing Council staff to the contracted provider.
- 2.4 The programme is expected to make tangible, measurable differences to customers, to favourably influence demand, and improve future service design, in the following ways, which will be the subject of detailed measures of success:
- More couples will be enabled to stay safely together;
  - Fewer domestic abuse cases will escalate to Level 4 (intensive);
  - There will be a reduction in the number of police call-outs to vulnerable families;
  - The children of formerly at-risk families will be able to stay safely in the family home, with positive implications for their continued development within the family and their future life prospects;
  - There will be a reduced risk of homelessness for vulnerable affected individuals;
  - There will be reduced demand for reactive healthcare, and for other services to at-risk individuals who would otherwise have had to leave the family home;
  - By establishing 'what works', future early interventions to counter risk of domestic abuse that increase the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the service, can be designed;
  - Staff will be upskilled through deploying new techniques learnt through the programme.
- 2.5 It should be noted that the detailed arrangements for the delivery of the contract remain to be agreed between the partners, and in discussion with the eventual service provider. This includes the formulation of detailed performance and outcome measures. The formal evaluation of the programme for both Beacon sites will be undertaken by the University of Lancaster.

### **3. Resources**

- 3.1 The estimated funding components are shown in the table below. The SafeLives charity administers grant available for this purpose from the Big Lottery Fund. Under this proposal the County Council's commitment of up to £840k over three years will be a combination of funding transferred to SafeLives, and 'in kind' provision of approximately four existing Council staff to work on the project. The total value of the contribution from the Council will be matched by SafeLives. The monetary element of the Council's contribution can be met from redeploying existing funds following the expiry in 2017 of a primarily reactive domestic abuse service contract which has not been renewed.
- 3.2 This means that the Council's participation in this innovative project can be achieved without any additional cost to the County Council, and a more

productive and better resourced programme replace the one that has ended. This is an opportunity to shift from reacting to the issues, to intervening proactively to prevent their occurrence. An additional strength of the arrangement is that the seconded staff would return to the Council at the end of the programme, equipped with the new skills that have been learned; these can then be deployed more widely through the internal workforce. The 'in-kind' component will be achieved through the secondment to the service provider of approximately 4 FTE existing Council staff. These staff members are currently working in the domestic abuse service; therefore their work will be refocussed towards the prevention of domestic abuse rather than dealing with the outcome of it. The following table demonstrates how the funding arrangements for this proposal would work. The Council's contribution will not exceed £280k per year, but any excess would be absorbed within existing budget provision.

Funding Proposal	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	<b>TOTAL</b>
	£000's	£000's	£000's	<b>£000's</b>
SafeLives Contribution	280	280	280	<b>840</b>
WSCC Cash Contribution	140	140	140	<b>420</b>
WSCC In Kind Contribution	140	140	140	<b>420</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>1,680</b>

## **Factors taken into account**

### **4. Consultation**

- 4.1 The proposal is founded on extensive consultation with service users, (especially the survivors of domestic abuse in West Sussex) delivery partners and practitioners, as part of IPEH service design. This strongly endorsed the national conclusions described in Section 1 above, about the gaps currently present in the service offer to the most vulnerable families in our West Sussex communities, and in particular the value of promoting a more preventative approach to Domestic Abuse, which this proposal advances. The Cabinet Members for Safer, Stronger Communities and for Children and Young People have been kept in close touch with the development of this proposal.

### **5. Risk Management Implications**

- 5.1 As with all leading-edge projects, some further clarification of operational detail will be necessary, but broadly, all known risks are considered to be under control. As this is a Beacon project, it is directed to learning and developing best practice, and success may include identifying techniques that

are not effective, as much as those that are. Notwithstanding this, it is expected that very significant improvements in service delivery will result. The financial arrangements in particular will be closely monitored, but there are no financial penalties contingent on contract performance that would affect the County Council. The role of SafeLives in running the resultant service delivery contract also helps to mitigate risk to the Council. The programme possesses a quality of robustness, in that SafeLives is deploying funds which derive from a national programme, the Big Lottery, endorsed by central government. The programme's underlying principles have generated enthusiasm at national level; the aim now is to put them into practice. Were the programme to end prematurely for any reason, the seconded Council staff would simply return to WSCC, bringing the acquired learning and expertise with them.

## **6. Other Options Considered**

- 6.1 The only other course of action would have been to forgo a prestigious opportunity to undertake innovative work in this field as a Beacon authority, and also the chance to inject further preventative resources at no net cost to the County Council.

## **7. Equality Duty**

- 7.1 This proposal is intended to protect the interests of any individual at risk of victimisation and abuse within a domestic setting, especially women and children. No other specific issues for those with a protected characteristic have been identified.

## **8. Social Value**

- 8.1 This proposal has strong social value, in its support of community and family life, and children being enabled to stay safely in the home.

## **9. Crime and Disorder Act Implications**

- 9.1 This proposal has the potential to reduce crime and disorder in a domestic setting.

## **10. Human Rights Implications**

- 10.1 The County Council is mindful of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights – The Right to Respect for Family and Private Life - and has taken relevant factors into consideration in preparing this proposal. In those cases where personal information about individuals or families is shared without subject consent, this is fully justified by existing legislation, and for the purpose of discharging the Council's and its partners' legitimate Social Care responsibilities.
- 10.2 The County Council is also mindful of Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - which states that all children have the right to be consulted and to have their opinion heard on any decision that affects them. The Voice of the Child (and Family) is a key design principle

embodied in the philosophy and operating principles of IPEH and its constituent parts.

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**Background Papers: None**