

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10:00am, Thursday, 6 August 2020

Domestic Abuse Policy Development 2019-2020

Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 This report is in response to a motion from Councillor Watt and contains no recommendations.

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Domestic Abuse Policy Development 2019-2020

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report was requested by the Policy and Sustainability Committee to summarise the specific policies that have been put in place by the City of Edinburgh Council, during the year to 31 March 2020, that seek to prevent gender inequalities and improve the Council's support for survivors of gender-based violence.

3. Background

- 3.1 There have been three major policy developments in the Council over the 2019-2020 period addressing domestic abuse – the Domestic Abuse Policy; the Domestic Abuse Housing Policy and the procurement system for commissioned services supporting survivors of domestic abuse.

4. Main report

- 4.1 The Domestic Abuse Policy was approved by committee in October 2019. The Policy outlines the Council's approach to managing and supporting both victims of gender-based violence as well as perpetrators of such violence.
- 4.2 The Policy seeks to provide information, support, and guidance for colleagues when a disclosure of domestic abuse is received. To help all employees understand the signs of domestic abuse and what help and support can be offered and sourced. The Policy also seeks to encourage perpetrators to address their behaviour and acknowledge the impact of their actions on others.
- 4.3 The Domestic Abuse Housing Policy was approved by committee in May 2020. The Policy supports Edinburgh's approach to domestic abuse as outlined in the Domestic Abuse Strategy and Action Plan (including adoption of the gender-based violence approach).
- 4.4 The Policy supports early intervention and aims to avoid victims/survivors of domestic abuse going down the homeless route wherever possible.

- 4.5 The main premise of the policy is that victims/survivors of domestic abuse should have choices regarding their housing situation.
- 4.6 The Domestic Abuse Housing Policy also outlined the issue that at present, it is not possible to evict a perpetrator of domestic abuse from a Scottish Secure Tenancy where the tenancy is in joint names; this was identified as something that needed to be challenged with Scottish Government, and a motion was raised for the Council Leader to write to Scottish Government asking that the current legislation be reviewed, to allow social landlords to evict perpetrators of domestic abuse.
- 4.7 The 10 current contracts for services for women and children who have experienced domestic abuse were extended to 31 March 2021.
- 4.8 The Council work with both Shakti Women's Aid and Sacro to provide services specifically for BAME women and children affected by gender-based violence.
- 4.9 During the second year of these contracts, the commissioned service providers supported 871 women and 270 children – a total of 1141 people receiving support over 12 months. This included people who were supported by more than one service at the same time, or transferring between services as their needs changed, or other services became available e.g. refuge spaces. This shows the cooperation between services to support women through joint working and a partnership approach.
- 4.10 The average duration of support has increased showing that people are being supported for longer, which reduces the staff capacity available for new cases and therefore the populations supported have reduced yet demand for such support remains high.
- 4.11 The three most common support needs addressed with women were Safety, Accommodation and Empowerment & Self-Esteem.
- 4.12 A Single Shared Assessment has been designed to be completed with a person when they first engage with a service – this is then shared with any additional services they access to save repetition and alleviate re-traumatising the individual.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 This report is submitted to committee for information and review.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 This report is for information on existing Council Policy and activity and has no new financial impact.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 This report is for information on existing Council Policy and activity and has no new stakeholder or community impact.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [Domestic Abuse Policy](#)
- 8.2 [Domestic Abuse Housing Policy](#)
- 8.3 [Domestic Abuse Strategy and Improvement Plan](#)

9. Appendices

- 9.1 None.