

DOMESTIC ABUSE

SITUATION UPDATE - JUNE 2020

Central
Bedfordshire

AS A COUNCIL

Central Bedfordshire is one of three Unitary Authorities in Bedfordshire, with approx 274,000 residents.

The DA Service has 3 full time, 1 part time and 1 shared service officer supporting all aspects of DA. The Service is non-case holding, supporting strategic work around commissioning, training, policy, MARAC, partnership interaction, communication, engagement and practice change.

The DA Service sits within Children's Services, but is a cradle to grave service across all Council departments.

COVID-19

- In the Council, non-essential face to face contact stopped, including all meetings. Staff were asked to work from home. Staff were redeployed to other essential roles within the Council. New Covid-19 governance structures were set up.
- DA meetings moved to a virtual platform (Microsoft Teams), which included the monthly MARAC. MARAC - worked with core agencies to enable discussion, information sharing and a virtual meeting to continue
- DA social media became essential. Facebook and twitter accounts were invaluable to inform and engage.
- DA website became an essential medium. Additional resources ensured articles, get help and news were kept updated.
- Weekly DA articles in the Council newsletter - both for officer safety and support for residents.
- Weekly Bedfordshire DA Partner meetings were started (used to be quarterly), over Teams. Voluntary sector, DA service providers, local authorities, Police, OPCC and health met each week to look at trends, referral rates, issues, gaps and carry out actions together in a coordinated response.
- Regional DA Network moved to a weekly and now fortnightly meeting (used to be quarterly), over Teams. Mapped impact of covid-19, reviewed trends and service responses, shared good practice.
- Joint communication and engagement carried out together by DA Partners and cross County:
 - GP Text Message
 - Swab Testing Site engagement
 - Poster campaign in food outlets, Pharmacies, Children's Centres
 - Services shared new practice (Own My Life)
 - Live DA Question and Answer session held
 - Safe Space scheme with Pharmacies - involving the Clinical Commissioning Group & GP's
- Working with the newly commissioned DA Perpetrator Service the provider moved to conduct one to one work over the phone (where safe to do so) with a perpetrator, rather than waiting until restrictions and social distancing changed and perpetrator group work starts again.
- Funding - available MoJ and PCC funding was discussed to ensure partners knew what bids were being made and if there was an opportunity for joint working.

WEEKLY SUMMARY

Each week, a round up of news, articles, support service updates, new guidance and responsive media posts are shared across the workforce, partner agencies and two other Local Authorities in Bedfordshire.

Links and embedded information is made available with contact email addresses and phone numbers.

Reminders of services available to victims, perpetrators and children are provided ('at a glance').

Practice guidance and fact sheets welcomed by front line officers.

DA COACHING OFFER - COUNCIL SPECIFIC

Leads in safeguarding informed the DA Service they were seeing more complex cases which involved DA within the relationship. So we started an Adult Services and a Children's Services DA Coaching offer.

The offer is for any Council professional dealing with a complex case of DA, or where they need specialist advise and help.

A referral by the professional is made to the service and they receive one to one support, information and advice.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE - COUNCIL SPECIFIC

We collated details of 172 0-16 year olds who were living in a household where there was DA / suspected DA.

With the support of a national charity we were gifted toys / craft sets to distribute to these children and young people during lock-down.

KEY REFLECTIONS

- Dynamic and rapid response of partners
- Co-ordination of working together supported each other and unified voice
- Better understanding of landscape between agencies
- Offers from partners to support each other
- Virtual platforms work!
- Pressure, pace and feeling this has been 'relentless'
- Short term funding - when will it stop?!
- Communication campaigns work better together
- Saying 'thank you' via the High Sheriff of Bedfordshire
- Lockdown has affected many people - some employees will have been further abused

MOVING ON

- 'Recovery Plans' - but we are not going to recover to go back to 'as was'
- Council are still in state of social distancing and office lockdown
- More virtual working with clients
- Continued and enhanced engagement via digital platforms
- Harness working as a partnership
- Voice of the Service User - engagement and development
- Build on DA voice we have seen in the media and nationally