



FINAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

DOMESTIC ABUSE

AW/01/2022

OCTOBER 2023

Auditor	Principal Auditor
Reviewer	Head of Audit & Assurance

Distribution list

Assistant Director, Public Protection
Director of Environment & Public Protection
Director of Children, Education and Families
Director of Adult Social Care
Director of Housing, Planning and Regeneration
Director of Human Resources, Customer Services and Public Affairs

Executive Summary

Audit Objective	The overall objective of the audit was to review the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's arrangements to discharge its duties under the Domestic Abuse Act, to ensure that tailored support is available to the victims and survivors.
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Assurance Level		Findings by Priority Rating		
Limited Assurance	There are significant control weaknesses which put the service or system objectives at risk. If unresolved these may result in error, abuse, loss, or reputational damage and therefore require urgent management attention.	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3
		1	9	0

Key Findings
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Since the responsibility of Domestic Abuse transferred in November 2022, the Head of Service has embraced the challenges facing the service and has made good progress such as getting a new contract in place from April 2023 with Contractor A. 2. The Domestic Abuse (DA) Strategic Lead has established strong working relationships with partners and agencies within the Operational Forum and the Assistant Director, Public Protection also has support from the Strategic Board members. Partner support for the Domestic Abuse service was evident from partner feedback regarding what the service is trying to achieve. Attendance at both these meetings is generally good. 3. The DA Strategic Lead and the Interim Community Safety Manager have both been proactive in addressing issues such as development of the action plans, evidencing achievements and the barriers to achievements. 4. The ownership and awareness of domestic abuse being a shared responsibility of everyone and every agency needs to continue to be embedded further. There was no comprehensive process to monitor the achievement of the 5 priorities within the Domestic Abuse Strategy. (See Recommendation 1). 5. Feedback from officers was that there should be further clarity of the direction of the Strategic Board and that this needed more authority and the oversight of senior leadership. (See Recommendation 2). 6. Domestic Abuse Training is required for the Public Protection team and members of the Operational Forum and Strategic Board. (See Recommendation 3)

7. There is no comprehensive risk register in place for the domestic abuse service to enable risks to be identified and managed. **(See Recommendation 4).**
8. For service planning, there needs to be a better way of recording achievements and where work has been progressed, but not necessarily with the desired outcome. **(See Recommendation 5).**
9. Contract management and monitoring processes needed to be improved. **(See Recommendation 6).**
10. DRIVE funding ceased at the end of June 2023 and will be replaced by a PAN London service for the perpetrator programme. The effectiveness of the latter is consequently not yet known **(See Recommendation 7).**
11. There were no specific domestic abuse procedures and/or process maps written detailing the individual processes involved. **(See Recommendation 8).**
12. We were not provided with evidence to confirm that annual reports required under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 had been completed and submitted. **(See Recommendation 9).**
13. It has not been possible for the service to identify and appoint the DA Ambassadors, which is one of the DA Strategy priorities, as it is dependent on the DA Employee Policy being approved. **(See Recommendation 10.)**

Management has agreed actions for all findings raised in this report. **Please see Appendix A.**

*Definitions of our assurance opinions and priority ratings are in **Appendix B.***

*The scope of our audit is set out in **Appendix C.***

Appendix A - Management Action Plan

1. Domestic Abuse Strategy & Ownership

Finding

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 came into force on April 21st, 2021. Referring to the DA Act 2021 Guidance, Bromley document, one of the aims of the Act is to 'Promote awareness – put domestic abuse at the top of everybody's agenda'. (This relates to Priority 1 of the DA Strategy – 'We will promote the message that tackling Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) is everyone's and every agency's responsibility'.

Intergenerational Domestic Abuse Strategy

The document 'An Intergenerational Domestic Abuse Strategy for 2021-2024, Making Domestic Abuse Everyone's Business', highlights that 'The services we commission in Bromley support victims of all ages, genders, ethnicities, sexualities, and backgrounds. We are committed to ensuring that all services are accessible, and that they reflect and meet the needs of our diverse community. A multi-agency partnership approach is essential in the delivery of effective, robust support to victim survivors of DVA, and effective interventions for perpetrators. All partners have a responsibility to deliver on the actions and priorities outlined in this strategy'.

One of the detailed areas of focus is 'Promoting the message that addressing DVA is everyone's and every agency's responsibility'. Feedback from officers and partners showed that a rethink is required with a new focus and determination to put this on the agenda for everyone and every agency. Staff within the Domestic Abuse service are committed to working to deliver on these collective priorities, but for there to be significant progress then there will need to be reconsideration of the ownership, raising the profile and communicating the Authority's commitment to tackling Domestic Abuse.

It was highlighted by managers and partners that awareness of the strategy was 'variable' and limited to 'those who needed to know'. The strategy needs to be further embedded and communicated. We acknowledge that a Domestic Abuse Employee Policy and Resident Policy are in the pipeline. (**See Recommendation 10**).

It should be noted that the service has worked hard in communicating the strategy and the service also produces a Domestic Abuse Newsletter. Contractor A also undertake their own promotional work. However, when reviewing the Bromley website, it was found that there was not a distinct page for public protection that is easily accessible detailing everything available pertaining to Domestic Abuse, the strategy, emergency contact details and help and support available.

There are 5 priorities detailed within the DA Strategy and findings within this report relate to all the 5 priorities. The five priorities are:-

- Priority 1 'We will promote the message that tackling DVA is everyone's and every agency's responsibility.
- Priority 2 We will commission effective services to support victims of DVA
- Priority 3 We will challenge perpetrators and explore interventions that measure the change in their behaviour
- Priority 4 We will increase and develop our existing training offer on DVA and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) to improve local responses to victims and survivors, and their families
- Priority 5 We will introduce DVA Ambassadors to support staff in the workplace'.

Enquiries with staff showed that there was not a comprehensive process to monitor the achievement of the priorities detailed within the Domestic Abuse Strategy.

Risk

A lack of ownership and focus on the desired outcomes will lead to reputational risk to the Authority. It may also lead to worse outcomes for vulnerable residents.

Recommendation

The Intergenerational Domestic Abuse Strategy needs to be embedded, further publicised, and communicated to all staff and agencies. This could be in part through the Domestic Abuse Employee Policy, when approved and published. This process could be assisted by the appointment of the Domestic Abuse Ambassadors. The Residents Policy should then follow subsequently.

A comprehensive process to monitor and document achievement of the priorities within the DA Strategy, should be in place and overseen by the Strategic Board.

There needs to be better engagement and acknowledgement of the shared responsibility and ownership in addressing Domestic Abuse throughout the Council, as it is everyone's and every agency's responsibility. The Council needs to embed this ownership, responsibility and awareness of Domestic Abuse, to all staff and services. This could be done through staff training. The Domestic Abuse Ambassadors could attend team meetings within services for the relevant areas, to further increase awareness, supported by the Domestic Abuse Employee Policy.

Rating

Priority 1

<p>The Bromley website should be updated with an easily accessible page detailing emergency contact details, the strategy and all help and support available.</p>	
<p><u>Management Response and Accountable Manager</u></p> <p><u>In response to the recommendations the actions below will be undertaken. The Public Protection Team will coordinate these however many of these activities will be on-going and will require Council-wide support to enable effective implementation.</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A campaign of activity to further promote The Intergenerational Domestic Abuse Strategy will be developed to coincide with the Domestic Abuse Awareness Month (October) as well as other related nationwide campaigns which Bromley will seek to amplify locally within the Council and through encouraging Partner agencies to do the same. <i>Domestic Abuse Strategic Lead.</i> 2. Internet and Intranet updates to be completed in preparation for promotion in October. <i>Domestic Abuse Strategic Lead.</i> 3. A review of the proposed DA Champions will take place to determine if this should remain a stand-alone role or have a wider Safeguarding remit. The review to be completed by 30/10/23 and recommendations made to the Safeguarding Adults Board and Safer Bromley Partnership for agreement and implementation. <i>Domestic Abuse Strategic Lead.</i> 4. In liaison with the Procurement Team seek to establish a process to encourage Contractors to provide a copy of their staff domestic abuse policy or encourage them to consider adopting a similar policy to the Council. <i>Domestic Abuse Strategic Lead.</i> 5. Introduce an Action Plan and KanBan project management tool for activity to ensure clear accountability and timelines, track progress and record achievements. <i>Domestic Abuse Strategic Lead.</i> 6. Develop a '7-Minute Learning' resource, including a recorded session, which can be accessed and utilised by Council officers. All staff to be encouraged to watch individually or as part of their team meetings by 31/3/24 and notify the DA Lead Officer when this has happened to capture the activity. <i>Domestic Abuse Strategic Lead.</i> 7. Residents policy to be developed in consultation with key partners. <i>Domestic Abuse Strategic Lead.</i> 	<p><u>Agreed timescale</u></p> <p>(1) 10/12/23</p> <p>(2) 30/09/23</p> <p>(3) 30/10/23</p> <p>(4) 31/3/24</p> <p>(5) 31/8/23</p> <p>(6) 30/9/23</p> <p>(7) 30/9/24</p>

2. Operational Forum & Strategic Board

Finding

There are not two distinct terms of references for each Forum / Board, but a joint Terms of Reference. The copy of the terms of reference supplied was in 'draft' status. This was also the case for the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) meeting terms of reference.

The term of reference refers to the Head of Service for Early Intervention and Family Support reporting from the strategic board to various committees. 'The strategic board will feed up to the Executive Committee and the Head of Service for Early Intervention and Family Support will report formally to committees, as part of the annual cycle'. This does not reflect current roles and responsibilities.

Feedback from managers and partners was that the Strategic Board needed more authority with oversight from senior leadership and that there needed to be clearer aims and objectives.

Risk

Out of date and incorrect information will not provide a clear direction of the scope and remit of these meetings. Without the necessary authority and support at a senior level, the service may struggle to tackle domestic abuse priorities.

Recommendation

- (i) The current structure and membership of the Strategic Board should be reviewed and finalised, as soon as possible along with the Board's aims and objectives.
- (ii) Terms of references for the Operational Forum, Strategic Board and MARAC meetings should be updated to reflect the current reporting lines, post holders since transfer in November 2022 and finalised.

Rating

Priority 2

Management Response and Accountable Manager

The Public Protection Team took over the management of the Domestic Abuse Strategic Board in November '22. As there is no requirement for the Board to be stand-alone and Membership to the Safer Bromley Partnership is very similar the option to merge the two will be reviewed and recommendations made to the groups for consideration. **Head of Safer Communities and Assistant Director, Public Protection.**

Agreed timescale

31/01/24

<p>As determined by the DA Strategic Board and SBP Group the Terms of Reference for the group(s) will be finalised and those of the associated operational/delivery groups. Head of Safer Communities and Assistant Director, Public Protection.</p>	<p>31/03/24</p>
<p>The MARAC process will be reviewed to ensure it remains the most effective and efficient method for protecting high risk victims of domestic abuse. The review and recommendations will be presented to the Board for consideration and implementation.</p> <p>Head of Safer Communities and Assistant Director, Public Protection.</p>	<p>31/03/24</p>

3. Domestic Abuse Training

<p><u>Finding</u></p> <p>Since the Domestic Service (DA) service transferred to Public Protection in November 2022, the team have had to adapt quickly working with partners and delivering the service. The team will have had to acquire knowledge of the service quickly. Some members of the team are new to the Domestic Abuse service and would benefit from establishing their knowledge and awareness further. The work of the Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) should be included. (This relates to Priority 4 of the DA Strategy - 'We will increase and develop our existing training offer on DVA and VAWG to improve local responses to victim survivors, and their families'.</p> <p>Partners have also cited training as an area of weakness in various areas and lacking the ability in the absence of training, to complete required risk assessments to the desired standard. Feedback also included 'a lack of understanding of the dynamics of DA, the need for DA awareness training for every level of the Council, lack of understanding of the complexities involved in the referrals being made, lack of specialised support e.g. no recourse to public funds, barriers to victims/survivors accessing support and training does not always the objectives of the DA Strategy'.</p> <p><u>Risk</u></p> <p>Staff may not be sufficiently prepared to deal with the challenges in managing this service area, leading to incorrect decisions being made.</p>

<p><u>Recommendation</u></p> <p>(i) A gap analysis of training needs to be undertaken across public protection and for the Operational Forum and Strategic Board members. Identified training needs for all the team including management and officers should then be taken forward in the development of a training plan for the service via learning & development.</p> <p>(ii) This should also include MARAC training including the completion of the risk assessments undertaken.</p>	<p><u>Rating</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Priority 2</p>
<p><u>Management Response and Accountable Manager</u></p> <p>Training is integrated into the DISCUSS process which has recently been completed in Public Protection and this information will be fed into the corporate Training and Development process. In addition to this, officers are encouraged to access events and opportunities which are provided through community safety and safeguarding networks. Head of Safer Communities.</p> <p>It is likely that DA training will already be available through statutory partner agencies, therefore, the Public Protection team will seek to identify gaps and opportunities which may be accessed across the partnership and promote these opportunities to staff. Head of Safer Communities.</p> <p>The 7-minute Learning package will seek to provide awareness and signpost officers to additional information and support if required. Domestic Abuse Strategic Lead.</p> <p>The need for training staff with a responsibility for undertaking Risk Identification Checklists (RIC) or Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence (DASH) assessment will be undertaken, and opportunities established. Head of Safer Communities.</p>	<p><u>Agreed timescale</u></p> <p>31/07/23</p> <p>30/09/23</p> <p>30/09/23</p> <p>30/11/23</p>

4. Risk & Issues Log

Finding

A copy of the Domestic Regulation risk and issues log was provided; however, this is not specific to the DA Service. Furthermore, the risks have not been assessed, and the register does not specify how these risks are being managed or mitigated. It was not found to be comprehensive as risks that were raised at the start of the audit had not been included.

Risks that are not highlighted such as:-

- 1) Impact of DRIVE and funding ending in June 2023 and transferring to the PAN London service.
- 2) Lack of a MARAC Coordinator being in post, however a temporary appointment has since been made.
- 3) Funding limitations.
- 4) Training not in place for current members of the team and more widely for all staff, partners, and MARAC training.

Risk

Risks across the service are not captured and documented, which may lead to priority decisions not being made.

Recommendation

There should be a comprehensive risk register for Domestic Abuse. This should include risk ratings, mitigations, and responsible officers. It should also include horizon scanning and emerging risks. Consideration could also be made to issues arising from contract monitoring and DHR reports and outcomes and service data, to enhance and better inform this document.

The risk register could be monitored via the action plans from the Operational Forum, Strategic Board, and/or other meetings.

Rating

Priority 2

Management Response and Accountable Manager

Agreed timescale

31/3/24

<p>The responsibilities for reducing domestic abuse, managing risk, and behaviour change sit with a range of statutory partners as set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Whilst the Council is one of those agencies, it would not be appropriate for the Council to record these as corporate risks. Any specific risks for the Council identified as part of this exercise will also be considered as part of the Council's risk management processes.</p> <p>It is therefore proposed that a Risk Log is developed by the Domestic Abuse Board, once its structure is agreed, and the agreement and mitigation of the risks is held by the members of that board. Assistant Director, Public Protection</p>	
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5. Service Planning

<p><u>Finding</u></p> <p>From discussions with the Interim Community Safety Manager and the DA Strategic Lead, it was confirmed, via interview, that there needs to be a better way of recording achievements and where work has been progressed, but not necessarily with the initially desired outcome. Officers explained there needs to be a recording mechanism detailing what has been achieved and what were/are the barriers to achieving the outcome.</p> <p><u>Risk</u></p> <p>With all the various work streams undertaken, work completed or in progress may be missed when mapping achievements over the year.</p>	
<p><u>Recommendation</u></p> <p>Work undertaken to achieve certain workstreams, projects and one-off pieces of work, should be documented within the service, to demonstrate outcomes and achievements. This will also help feed into the work undertaken in developing the new Domestic Abuse Strategy in 2024, future service planning and the MBEB priorities. (Making Bromley Even Better).</p>	<p><u>Rating</u></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #ffc000; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">Priority 2</div>
<p><u>Management Response and Accountable Manager</u></p> <p>It is intended to introduce an Action Plan and KanBan project management tool for activity to ensure clear accountability and timelines, track progress and record achievements. Domestic Abuse Strategic Lead.</p>	<p><u>Agreed timescale</u></p> <p>30/09/24</p>

6. Contract Management & Contract Monitoring

Finding

(This relates to Priority Number 2 of the DA Strategy – We will commission effective services to support victims of DVA).

Contractor B (Chairing of Domestic Homicide Reviews)

The contract with Contractor B is for a five-year period with a total cost of £78,325. There are no formal contract management and monitoring meetings arrangements in place for Contractor B. The Head of Safer Communities confirmed that he does not undertake formal contract monitoring meetings. He advised that he has not had the need to query much with the contractor. The Head of Safer Communities advised that KPIs would be put in place for the new contract in 2024.

Contractor A

A new contract is in place with Contractor A from 1/4/23 to 31/3/25 with a total contract value of £467,686. The specification states that *'Precise key performance indicators and other performance impact measurements will be negotiated with the successful service provider during the post award mobilisation period.* This had not been put in place at the time of this report.

Quarterly monitoring reports had been provided by the contractor under the previous contract. We reviewed the January 2023 meeting notes and found that there was no standard agenda in place, no actions being identified and who would be responsible for taking this forward with agreed implementation dates.

Risk

If contract monitoring meetings are not undertaken and documented, there is no record of discussions and agreed decisions, in the event of a contractual dispute. Without the development and agreement of the KPIs with Contractor A, officers may not be sufficiently informed of the performance of the key areas of the contract since commencement.

Recommendation

Contractor B

Contract management and monitoring should be undertaken regularly throughout the contract period, at an appropriate and proportionate frequency for the budget and ad hoc nature of the contract.

Rating

Priority 2

<p>Contractor A</p> <p>The contract monitoring minutes should record meeting attendees, any issues that may need clarification regarding contractor service provision, KPI performance targets and actual data, actions arising and timescales for implementation by the action owner.</p> <p>Key Performance Indicators should be agreed as soon as possible with the provider and monitored through the quarterly performance data submitted by the provider, as well as through the contract monitoring meetings.</p> <p>There should be an agreed agenda, minuting format and frequency of meetings going forward for contract monitoring meetings.</p>	
<p><u>Management Response and Accountable Manager</u></p> <p>Contractor B</p> <p>Contract management and monitoring will be undertaken regularly throughout the contract period, at an appropriate and proportionate frequency for the budget and ad hoc nature of the contract. Head of Safer Communities.</p> <p>Contractor A</p> <p>An agreed schedule of meetings with the contractor will be put in place with an agreed Agenda for standing items.</p> <p>There is limited capacity for administrative functions such as Minute Taking in the Public Protection Service, therefore for efficiency of officer time a Decisions, Action, Notes (DAN) Log on Teams will be maintained by all members to ensure that key aspects of the meetings are recorded, with clear timelines and ownership of actions and progress updates. This will commence in line with the schedule of meetings.</p> <p>A schedule of KPIs will be agreed at the next meeting with the provider. Head of Safer Communities.</p>	<p><u>Agreed timescale</u></p> <p>30/09/23</p> <p>30/09/23</p>

7. Perpetrator Programme

Finding

One of the priorities within the Domestic Abuse Strategy is “We will challenge perpetrators and explore interventions that measure the change in their behaviour” (Priority Number 3 of the DA Strategy).

DRIVE, the perpetrator programme, ended in June 2023 dropping capacity in the borough from 70 to 8 places. A new PAN London service is due to replace this instead. This will impact on the perpetrator programme locally and will need to be reviewed, to ensure that the Council can deliver on the objective set out in the DA strategy. Further DRIVE only covers high risk high harm perpetrators. It remains the case that there is no support in the borough for other perpetrators of DA not deemed high risk or high harm.

Risk

Future perpetrators who would like to engage with the programme, may go unsupported. Victims of DA and their children and families will be exposed to increased risk as perpetrators cannot access support for behaviour change.

Recommendation

Management will need to assess and review the effectiveness of the new PAN London service to ensure that this supports the achievement of the objective detailed within the DA Strategy (Priority Number 3 of the DA Strategy).

Rating

Priority 2

Management Response and Accountable Manager

Reviews of the implementation and effectiveness of the pan-London service model will be forward planned to be undertaken and presented to the Domestic Abuse Board Quarterly, including updates from the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), Drive and Probation. **Assistant Director, Public Protection.**

30/11/23

8. Procedures, Processes & Access to Information

Finding

Apart from guidance from the Domestic Abuse Act and the Bromley Guidance document, currently, knowledge is held by individual officers and there is not a shared understanding of processes or the location of documents or indeed access to them. Currently, the Domestic Abuse Strategic Lead has access to documents that other members of the team cannot locate or access.

The Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) procedure was being reviewed at the time of testing, as confirmed by the Head of Service, Safer Communities. As the statutory guidance on DHRs is also in the process of being updated, which will feed into the Council's procedure, we have not made a further recommendation at this time.

Risk

Restricted access to key information and documents impact on service delivering and planning.

If procedures are not reflecting current practice, different processes may be followed, which may not meet desired standards or outcomes.

Recommendation

Procedures and /or process maps should be written and be readily available to staff. There should be a central repository so all team members can access relevant documents.

Rating

Priority 2

Management Response and Accountable Manager

The Public Protection Service are actively moving towards a more collaborative working practice through Teams. All key information and documents will be stored in a Team, with access granted to external partners. This allows immediate access to information by staff. The function is currently being piloted with the Safer Bromley Partnership and, subject to agreement of the future delivery of the DA Strategic Board, this process will be extended to relevant members. **Domestic Abuse Strategic Lead.**

Agreed timescale

31/01/24

9. Local Authority responsibilities under Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Finding

The DA Act 2021 – states that the local authority should ‘Submit an annual report to the Secretary of State’.

We made enquiries with various officers and we were not provided with evidence to confirm that the annual reports for 2021, 2022 and 2023 have been completed and submitted.

Risk

The Authority is not meeting its responsibilities under the Domestic Abuse Act.

<p><u>Recommendation</u></p> <p>The Assistant Director, Public Protection should confirm whether the annual report to the Secretary of State has been completed for 2021,2022 and 2023 and if these have not been submitted, implement the required process.</p>	<p><u>Rating</u></p> <p>Priority 2</p>
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<p><u>Management Response and Accountable Manager</u></p> <p>The AD Public Protection will ensure the appropriate governance is in place to support the relevant services to submit the required returns under the DA Act 2021. <i>Assistant Director, Public Protection.</i></p>	<p><u>Agreed timescale</u></p> <p>31/03/24.</p>
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10. Domestic Abuse Employee Policy

Finding

The DA Service have developed a DA Employee Policy that is planned to be issued. In order to support this, it is planned that DA Ambassadors will need be identified and appointed across the Council, which is one of the DA Strategy priorities, 'We will introduce DVA Ambassadors to support staff in the workplace'. (Priority 5 of the DA Strategy).

The DA Employee Policy is awaiting approval prior to being rolled out. It should be noted that within a previous published DHR report, one of the recommendations specific to Bromley was 'Implementing a champion system for domestic abuse throughout the partnership'.

Risk

Without an approved DA Employee Policy in place, training cannot get underway across the Council and the DA Ambassadors cannot be appointed to help create awareness of domestic abuse to support the embedding of the DA strategy. Without approval, this will further impact on the DAHA accreditation for housing and developing the DA Policy for Residents. (DAHA accreditation is the UK benchmark for how housing providers should respond to domestic abuse in the UK).

Recommendation

The DA Employee Policy should be progressed to approval as soon as possible to enable the service to progress with their service priorities, without further delay.

Rating

Priority 2

Management Response and Accountable Manager

The AD Public Protection will ensure appropriate governance is in place and expert advice is provided to support the relevant services to adopt and deliver this policy. **Assistant Director, Public Protection.**

Agreed timescale

31/05/2024

Appendix B - Assurance and Priority Ratings

Assurance Levels

Assurance Level	Definition
Substantial Assurance	There is a sound system of control in place to achieve the service or system objectives. Risks are being managed effectively and any issues identified are minor in nature.
Reasonable Assurance	There is generally a sound system of control in place but there are weaknesses which put some of the service or system objectives at risk. Management attention is required.
Limited Assurance	There are significant control weaknesses which put the service or system objectives at risk. If unresolved these may result in error, abuse, loss or reputational damage and therefore require urgent management attention.
No Assurance	There are major weaknesses in the control environment. The service or system is exposed to the risk of significant error, abuse, loss or reputational damage. Immediate action must be taken by management to resolve the issues identified.

Action Priority Ratings

Risk rating	Definition
Priority 1	A high priority finding which indicates a fundamental weakness or failure in control which could lead to service or system objectives not being achieved. The Council is exposed to significant risk and management should address the recommendation urgently.
Priority 2	A medium priority finding which indicates a weakness in control that could lead to service or system objectives not being achieved. Timely management action is required to address the recommendation and mitigate the risk.
Priority 3	A low priority finding which has identified that the efficiency or effectiveness of the control environment could be improved. Management action is suggested to enhance existing controls.

Appendix C – Audit Scope

Audit Scope

We reviewed the adequacy and effectiveness of controls over the following risks:

- Governance arrangements may not be effective resulting in a lack of consistency of approach across the service and partners/ agencies, and lack of joined up working.
- Strategy awareness and communication activities is not effective leading to awareness not being embedded.
- Contractual spend is not within budget, impacting the financial resources within the wider service.
- Poor service delivery and contractual performance that does not meet expectations or the needs of users.
- Staff and partners are not suitably informed due to a lack of awareness of existing or new training available to them.
- Lessons learnt and changes to approach and policy are not taken forward following Domestic Homicide and Violence Reviews.

Our scope included the following: -

- Governance arrangements specifically to the Domestic Abuse Strategy, Strategic Board, Operational Board, MARAC and Children & Families Hub with individual responsibilities - review of minutes and terms of reference for each meeting.
- Budget for the Domestic Abuse Service and any associated grant funding and contractual spend.
- Domestic Abuse contractual arrangements, management, and monitoring – review arrangements and contract monitoring minutes
- Domestic Abuse perpetrator programme. – review programme.
- Domestic Homicide Reviews and Domestic Violence Homicide Reviews – review processes.
- Annual Return – review return depending on timescale for return date.
- Domestic Abuse Partnership- review progress on establishment.

We did not review instances of domestic abuse at case level. We interviewed relevant staff within Community Safety, the Head of Service for Safer Communities and key officers within the wider Council. We also interviewed representatives from some external partners.