




COVER SHEET

Meeting and Date of meeting	Trust Board 26 October 2023	
Title of paper	Executive Director of Social Work Report	
Accountable Director	Name	Colm McCafferty
	Position	Interim Director of CYP
Report Author	Name	Colm McCafferty
	Email	Colm.McCafferty@southerntrust.hscni.net
This paper sits within the Trust Board role of:	Accountability	
This paper is presented for:	Assurance	
Links to Trust Corporate Objectives	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Promoting Safe, High Quality Care
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Supporting people to live long, healthy active lives
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Improving our services
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Making best use of our resources
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Being a great place to work – supporting, developing and valuing our staff
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Working in partnership

	<p><i>The report author will complete this report cover sheet fully. The Accountable Director must satisfy themselves that the cover sheet is accurate and fully reflects the report. The expectation is that the Accountable Director has read and agreed the content (cover sheet and report).</i></p> <p><i>Its purpose is to provide the Trust Board/Committee with a clear summary of the report/paper being presented, how it impacts on the people we serve and the key matters for attention and the ask of the Trust Board/Committee</i></p>
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1. Detailed summary of paper contents:

This report is an update on the Executive Director for Social Work's areas of responsibility. The paper provides an overview of issues relating to the social work and social care workforce, including challenges in relation to delivery of statutory functions. This reporting cycle has a primary focus on Domestic Abuse and provides assurance (including identification of areas for development) in relation to the arrangements within Southern Trust for responding to domestic abuse and protecting victims, including children who may be impacted.

Domestic abuse has a very significant and negative impact on children, adults and communities and places considerable pressures on many aspects of Health and Social Care provision, both in relation to immediate impact and in responding to inter-generational trauma experienced by victims.

2. Areas of improvement/achievement:

Regarding general social work services in the Trust:

- The Social Work profession, working across Directorates within the Southern Trust, continues to deliver on the discharge of Delegated Statutory Functions, with improvements noted in supervision arrangements and completion of annual reviews within the Directorate of Mental Health and Disability.
- There has been limited success in filling vacancies though the recruitment of newly qualified social work staff and a bespoke recruitment campaign targeted at social workers domiciled within the ROI and UK.
- All Directorates have engaged with SPPG in relation to mid-year review of DSF action plans, no escalations identified.
- Adult Safeguarding services and Looked After Safeguarding services both received a satisfactory level assurance report following respective BSO Internal Audits
- The Trust has robust arrangements in place in order to fulfil its commitment to the 'Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy 2016 – 2023'.

3. Areas of concern/risk/challenge:

- Social work workforce challenges across all Directorates continue to impact on the Trust's ability to consistently deliver Delegated Statutory Functions. Every effort has been made within the Directorates to manage these challenges and mitigate the impact, with a focus on Quality Improvement and recruitment and retention of staff.
- Workforce challenges in Children's Services is resulting in higher numbers of unallocated cases than pre COVID. In response to this an options appraisal is being progressed in relation to a number of potential service models.
- The demand for Domiciliary Care continues to outweigh capacity. There have been a number of recruitment events held across the Trust with the aim of reducing staff deficits.

4. Impact: Provide details on the impact of the following and how. If this is N/A you should explain why this is an appropriate response.

Corporate Risk Register	Yes. Social Work Staffing shortages across all Programmes of Care
Board Assurance Framework	Yes. Delegated Statutory Functions and associated challenges as previously reported
Equality and Human Rights	N/A

Executive Director of Social Work Report for Trust Board 26 October 2023

1. WORKFORCE

There continues to be challenges across Directorates to consistently deliver on all Delegated Statutory Functions due to the sustained workforce deficits and associated pressures. Every effort has been made within the Directorates to manage these challenges and mitigate the impact, with a focus on recruitment and retention of staff.

There has been limited success in filling vacancies though the recruitment of newly qualified social work staff and a bespoke recruitment campaign targeted at social workers domiciled within the ROI and UK. As issues remain with an undersupply of social workers graduating in Northern Ireland.

In response to local workforce deficits the service has been seeking to explore alternative staff recruitment initiatives, including bespoke Southern Trust recruitment campaigns and the Southern Trust was recently represented at a social work jobs fair in Manchester, with planned attendance at other similar events across the ROI and UK. An information event is being held for local schools to consider a career within social work and ongoing engagement with schools is planned. Consistent with the People Plan, retention work is underway with staff to ensure their sustained commitment to working within the Trust.

A short film is being launched on 27th of October to showcase social work within children services. It has been led by Southern Trust, in partnership with the Department of Health, the Northern Ireland Social Care Council and the other Trusts. The film showcases the work from across the region, with powerful inputs from social work staff and care experienced young people from the Southern Trust.

This work is being progressed as part of the Children and Young People’s Directorate implementation of the People Plan.

2. SOCIAL WORK & SOCIAL CARE GOVERNANCE/Delegated Statutory Functions(DSF)

Delegated Statutory Functions

The Trust continues to deliver delegated statutory services, despite the increasing demands on services and staff across all areas of service delivery. All Directorates have engaged in mid-year reviews with SPPG in respect of their DSF action plans.

Staffing

The Children & Young People's Directorate continues to experience significant social work staffing deficits which inevitably has an impact on the Services' ability to allocate cases and consistently maintain and improve standards. The pressures are apparent in both the Family Support & Safeguarding Division and the Corporate Parenting Division. The Directorate is progressing an options appraisal in relation to a number of service models, with the intention of consolidating core services, maximising the use of skills mix and responding to the impact of the ongoing challenges on staff teams. This work will conclude by December 2023 with recommendations in respect of future service configuration.

Supervision Standards

Within the Directorate of Mental Health and Disability, staffing challenges had previously been identified which impacted on the delivery of professional supervision to band 7 social work staff across the Disability Division. This has now been resolved, and the Directorate can provide assurance that all Social Work staff have an aligned professional supervisor, and receive both operational and professional supervision in line with the Regional Supervision Framework.

The Learning Disability Division has welcomed a number of newly qualified Social Workers. Within their assessed year in employment (AYE) these newly qualified staff require significant support and easement. A comprehensive range of supports are in place to ensure these new Social Workers are given a stable start to their careers which will support overall staff retention. The service continues to focus on reducing the number of outstanding annual reviews and this is slowly an improving picture. Transition services have been changed, with all transition cases now being transferred to the core Adult Learning Disability teams. There is a requirement to continue to focus on collaboration between Children's and Adult services to maximise the most effective transition experience for young adults and their families.

Carers Assessments

Within the Mental Health Division work is ongoing in relation to increasing the numbers of carer assessments completed across community Mental Health teams and inpatient units. Community Mental Health teams have made steady improvements in relation to compliance with annual review requirements, and have increased compliance with annual reviews from 68% in March 2023 to 78% in August 2023. The role out of the Think Family model is a primary focus across all mental health services. Think Family awareness training has been agreed as mandatory for all Mental Health Practitioners and a Directors steering group has been established in collaboration with CYP.

The Physical Disability Service has experienced increased demand and challenge regarding the placement of a number of extremely complex individuals with acquired brain injuries. Outstanding packages of care remain an issue particularly in the support of timely discharge from hospital.

Domiciliary Care

Adult Community Services continue to face ongoing challenges with the recruitment and retention of Social Work staff and are working closely with Human Resources colleagues to address this. The staffing deficits continue to have an impact on the

Directorate's compliance with Delegated Statutory Functions across all key metrics. The demand for domiciliary care continues to outweigh capacity, there have been a number of recruitment events held across the Trust with the aim of reducing staff deficits.

3. DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES IN SOUTHERN TRUST

The purpose of this update to Trust Board is to provide assurances in relation to how the Southern Trust is fulfilling its responsibilities to ensure a multi-agency response to domestic and sexual violence in accordance with the 'Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy 2016 – 2023'.

Domestic abuse is defined as:

Threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former intimate partner or family member. Domestic abuse can take many forms, which may involve physical violence.

However, often it may not involve physical violence but may involve a wide range of non-physically abusive behaviour including what is often referred to as coercive control, ie controlling behaviour intended to increase dependency on an abuser.

We know that many victims of domestic and sexual Violence live their lives in fear and are significantly impacted upon by the abuse they have suffered. It can have an enormous impact on all aspects of a person's life: their physical and mental health; their identity and relationships with friends and family; housing and their finances. The issues involved are complex, needing a sustained multi-faceted response and often access to services across health and social care at all levels of need.

Domestic abuse is complex in terms of who is involved as well as what, where, when and why it occurs. It can affect anyone regardless of their social standing or socio-economic class and can take place across many different relationships and locations including Intimate Partner Abuse, (IPV) in current and former partner relationships, with post separation being a high risk trigger, abuse by family members, (including child to parent abuse), abuse involving multiple needs and can include children (under the age of 18) as victims of domestic abuse.

Prevalence of Domestic Violence

An overview of the context of domestic abuse in Northern Ireland, as reported to the police, is set out below. However, the true figure is likely to be much higher due to underreporting by those who cannot or do not feel able to report to police.

From April 2022 to March 2023 domestic abuse crime accounted for 20% of all police recorded crime.

Apr 22 – Mar 2023

<p>32,875 domestic abuse INCIDENTS responded to by police</p>	<p>22,343 domestic abuse CRIMES recorded by police</p>	<p> On average every 16 MINUTES domestic abuse was reported to police</p>	<p>Took place EVERY DAY of the year</p>
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68% of victims of domestic abuse crimes were **female**, **32%** were **male**

83% of offenders were **male**, **15%** were **female**

- 916 domestic abuse offence crimes**, 37% with a child aggravator attached
- 34%** of relationships involved a former partner
24% a current partner
- 1 in 4 lesbian and bisexual women** and **4 in 10 gay and bisexual men** experienced domestic abuse
- 94%** of offenders were **aged 18 or over**

Since the introduction of Domestic Homicide Reviews in 2020 there have been 16 domestic homicides in Northern Ireland. There were 8 murders with a domestic abuse motivation between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023. Five of the victims were female, 3 were male. Two of the female victims resided in the SHSCT area.

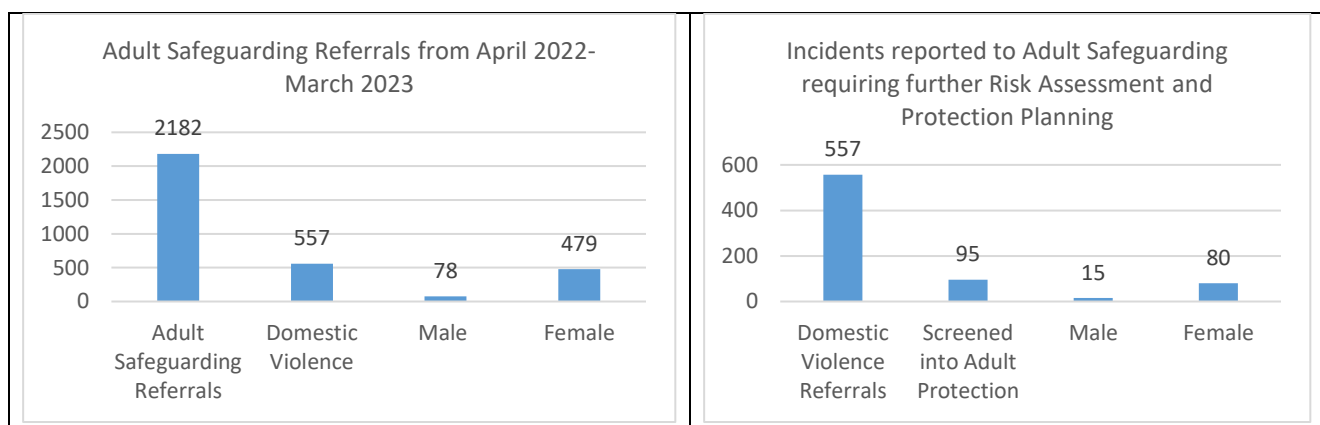
The impact of domestic and sexual abuse is personal to each individual affected. Women are disproportionately affected and more likely to experience multiple incidents of abuse, and often face many barriers to reporting abuse. Men also suffer domestic and sexual abuse and due to societal norms are less likely to seek help and support. Research also highlights domestic and sexual abuse occurs in same sex relationships.

Domestic and sexual abuse is commonly under-reported in ethnic minority communities. People may be at particular risk because of language barriers and a lack of local connections or understanding of how to navigate local services. Cultural values can also prevent disclosures of abuse out of fear of dishonouring family or their community. An individual may also be dependent on the person abusing them for immigration status, lack financial independence and have no recourse to public funds. This has been noted as a significant factor within the SHSCT area due to the BME population.

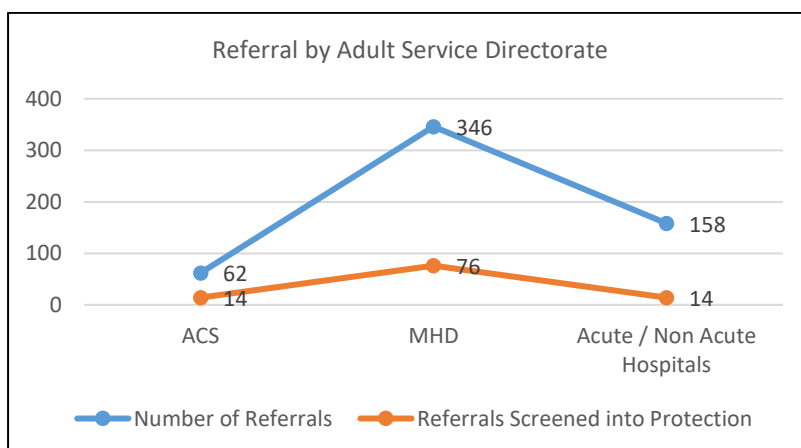
The Southern Trust area arrangements

Adult Safeguarding

Where a vulnerable adult is identified as a result of a domestic abuse incident a referral is made to Adult Safeguarding for screening and further assessment as required. Within the SHSCT Adult Safeguarding services a significant number of referrals are received related to concern regarding domestic abuse (557 of 2182), female represent 86% of the referrals and 14 % are male victims.



Of the 557 referrals – 95 victims of domestic abuse were assessed as requiring further risk assessment and protection planning under the adult protection process; 80 female and 15 male protection cases.



- 62 referrals originate from ACS (including Memory services) – 14 progressed to adult protection intervention following initial assessment by APGT.
- 346 referrals originate from MHD - 76 progressed to adult protection intervention following initial assessment by APGT.
- 158 referrals originate from Acute / Non acute hospital (147 female and 11 male) - 14 referrals required further adult protection intervention following initial assessment by APGT.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

The MARAC operational guidance (safelie.org.uk) sets out arrangements in respect of the MARAC process, whereby Police, children's social services, health and other relevant agencies meet twice per month to review referrals where there are high risk concerns in respect of the safety of an individual or family. The MARAC provides a confidential local forum to discuss how to help victims at high risk of murder or serious harm. Within the MARAC, information is shared about the victim, the family and perpetrator. An action plan is developed for each victim. Collectively, the meeting writes an action plan for each victim.

Referrals into MARAC 2022-2023 in Southern Trust Area

The main referring agency into the MARAC process is the PSNI, followed by the Health and Social Care Trusts and then Women's Aid. Other referring agencies include, Housing Executive, Education, Victim Support and Probation.

In 2022 there was a total of 247 cases heard at MARAC in Southern Trust, in 136 cases children were identified as being connected with either the victim or perpetrator. There were 111 cases discussed where no children were identified. In 2022 there was 11 cases referred in to the MARAC process from Children's' services and 8 cases from Adult Services.

In 2023 (up to September) there was a total of 154 cases heard at MARAC, including 102 cases where children were connected to the victim or the perpetrator. A total of 52 cases were discussed with no children being linked. In 2023 there were 18 cases referred by Children's Services into the MARAC process and 10 referrals from Adult Services.

The Southern Trust has seen an increase in 2023 in the number of cases discussed at MARAC, a trajectory which is likely to continue.

The Department of Justice commissioned an Independent Consultancy to undertake a review of the MARAC process and the findings of this report have recommended a change in the process and support for victims of domestic and sexual abuse, including children and dependant adults living within a domestically abusive environment. These findings are being considered by DOH and DOJ in consultation with key stakeholders.

Children and Young People Directorate

Impact of domestic violence on victims and children and young people

While children's experience of domestic abuse are distinct to them, they are also often connected to the abuse of their parent or carer. They can also be victims in their own right and can develop associated complex needs. The impact of seeing, hearing or experiencing the effects of abuse is significant and the long-term consequences of this trauma can stretch into adulthood. Adverse childhood

experiences can have lasting, negative effects on a child's development, health and well-being, leading to behavioural problems, difficulties at school and increased risk of difficulties in future relationships. There may also be complex needs for those children in refuges, who may face additional barriers in getting support. Additionally, there is often a stigma attached to attending school from a refuge.

The prevalence of children and young people living with parents who have experienced domestic abuse is greater within the most vulnerable children, including children on the Child Protection Register. Research also highlights that many Looked After children and young people have greater adverse childhood experiences, including high prevalence of experiencing domestic violence.

Women's Aid

In the Southern Trust locality, the Trust commission Women's Aid Armagh & Down to provide refuge and supports to women and children who have experienced domestic abuse, during the period 2022-23 Women's Aid have provided refuge for 28 women, and 25 children. 84 women could not be accommodated, predominantly due to the refuge being full at the time of referral.

As part of the Service Level Agreement, Women's Aid provide direct work with victims of domestic abuse and with children impacted by domestic abuse. This involves individual outreach support, community work, programmes for recovery for women and children. During this period, 1061 women have accessed community support services via Women's Aid and 106 children have accessed support services across the Southern Trust. There is a significant demand for supports for victims of domestic abuse and children living within domestic abuse family networks.

The Trust work in partnership with Men's Advisory Project to provide support to male victims of domestic abuse via a regional service provision.

In addition programmes are delivered within primary and post primary schools; health relationship programmes.

Police Service Northern Ireland (PSNI)

Police are in the main the first point of contact for victims who report an incident of domestic abuse. PSNI have an 'Enforcement Order' in place where all incidents of domestic abuse are referred to the HSCTs. During the period 2022-23, 1047 children (3 children per day on average) were referred by PSNI to SHSCT, 68 children were referred due to child protection concerns and 979 were referred due to domestic violence. There are cases referred to SHSCT due to imminent safeguarding risks in relation to immediate Child Protection concerns or where alternate care arrangements are required with domestic violence being the primary area of risk.

All victims and children referred to the SHSCT receive an assessment which identifies the pathway for further support and intervention; referral to Family Support Hubs for Early Intervention supports, ongoing support via Trust Domestic Abuse and Engagement Service or bespoke care plan in relation to a Child In Need via Family Intervention Team.

Regional Developments

The 'Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy 2016 – 2023' includes five strands;

- Driving Change through Co-operation and Leadership
- Prevention
- Early Identification
- Delivering Change through Responsive Services
- Support, Protection and Justice.

The action plan developed alongside the strategy is progressed via key partner agencies, including a critical role by the local Area Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnerships.

Southern Trust Area Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnership (SADSVP)

The Southern Trust Area Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnership (SADSVP) is chaired by the Southern Trust's Assistant Director for Family Support and Safeguarding who represents the Southern Trust and the SADSVP on the regional Stakeholders Assurance Group (SAG), co-chaired by the DoJ and DoH, reporting to the Strategic Delivery Board. The SADSVP is made up of 23 members across 12 partner agencies including; Southern Trust Adult and Children Safeguarding leads, Training and Development Team, Mental Health Services, Principal Officer for Public Protection Arrangement, Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference Representative, PSNI, Women's Aid, Men's Advisory Project, Nexus, Probation, Police and Community Partnerships, Barnardos, Public Prosecution Service, Trade Unions and Victims Support.

A significant body of work has progressed within the past number of years with a number of notable achievements under the strategy including;

Legislation

- Introduction of a new domestic abuse offence in 2022, criminalising a pattern of non-physically abusive behaviours.
- Provision for an entitlement to paid safe leave for victims of domestic abuse under the Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Act (NI) 2022.
- Protection from stalking legislation was brought forward (includes outside a domestic or family context) alongside the Justice Act (NI) 2022, this provides for new offences of up-skirting, down blousing, cyber flashing; an adult pretending to be a child for the purpose of child grooming as well as the extended scope of abuse of position of trust offences to the areas of sport and faith and the offence of disclosure of private sexual images to include 'threats to disclose' are due to be implemented in November 2023. An advertising campaign is due to be launched in tandem with the new offences schedule on 27 November 2023.
- Non-fatal strangulation and preventing the so-called 'rough-sex' defence.

- Preparatory work has been completed in relation to Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Order, this will be progressed within the new 2023-2030 Strategy (to be approved by the Stormont Executive).
- Domestic Violence and Abuse Disclosure Scheme (DVADS) - Revised guidance will be launched over the next couple of months, to be accompanied by a press release and a further push on public awareness. The DVADS adverts were shown during the Women's World Cup on ITV, and a concentrated programme of DVADS awareness raising is planned for Christmas/New Year. DVADS awareness training is currently being delivered to PSNI officers and staff.

Training and Awareness

- New eLearning package bolstered the introduction of new domestic abuse offence and has been rolled out across SHSCT and available across public and voluntary sector. Consideration should be given to the above training being mandatory for SHSCT employees.
- Raising awareness of the new domestic abuse offence through multi-media campaigns at a regional and local level via the Southern Area Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership.

Learning and Review

- Domestic Homicide Reviews were introduced into statute in Northern Ireland in 2020, to learn lessons from tragic deaths arising from domestic violence.
- The ¹Gillen Review 'Report into the law and procedures in serious sexual offences in Northern Ireland' Part 1, Gillen (2019) recommended the need for Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) interviews to be re-visited to improve the standard and quality of ABE interview recordings recommending a greater emphasis on a smaller cadre of specially selected skilled and trained officers to conduct ABEs. On behalf of the region a Joint PSNI / SHSCT Pilot was established to take account of findings from the PSNI Consultation following the Gillen Review thus establishing an ABE Cadre where a small number of trained, dedicated PSNI officers and SHSCT Social Workers would complete all ABE interviews within the SHSCT for the duration of the pilot in 2020. The findings from the pilot concluded the need for regional implementation of the ABE Cadre model, this is currently being progressed across Northern Ireland.
- Establishment of a Commissioner Designate for Victims of Crime, including representation of victims of domestic abuse.

Services

- Free public transport for those going to refuge or temporary accommodation.

¹ Gillen, J, (2019) *Gillen Review: Report into the law and procedures in serious sexual offences in Northern Ireland, Part 1*, DOJ. gillenreview.org

- Ask for Ani Code Word scheme was introduced to allow those at risk or suffering domestic abuse to signal to pharmacy staff that they need help to access support.
- Pilot of Sexual Offences Legal Advisor was completed.
- Domestic Violence and Abuse Disclosure Scheme was introduced in 2018 to enable individuals to ascertain whether there is a risk posed by a partner/former partner and make an informed decisions about the relationship.

Governance Arrangements

The Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy 2016 – 2023 is led jointly by the Department of Health and the Department of Justice and cuts across the work of other Departments. Within the strategy, there is increased emphasis on taking account of lived experiences, as well as reflecting the needs of different groups in the work that is being progressed.

Given the ongoing development of an 'Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy', it is intended that the reporting structures are kept under review so that the reporting mechanisms between the two strategies, and the actions taken forward, complement each other and are aligned.

There are a number of key fora within SHSCT with a key priority in relation to domestic abuse. The Chair of the Southern Area Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnership chairs the Child and Young Peoples Safeguarding Interface meeting and the CYP Social Work Social Care Governance Forums. Domestic violence is a standing agenda item to share information from the SADSVP, including any regional developments such as legislative changes. The Chair of the SADSVP is a key member of the Southern Area Safeguarding Panel (SASP), domestic violence is a key priority for Safeguarding Board Northern Ireland and as such is a standing agenda item on the SASP bi-monthly meetings and yearly Action Plan.

Trust Policy

The SHSCT have updated the Work Place Policy on Domestic Abuse in June 2022 to include changes in legislation and Adult Safeguarding arrangements. The purpose of this policy is to signal a clear commitment of the Trust's support to any member of staff affected by domestic abuse. The policy aims to, raise awareness and identify the impact of domestic abuse on employees, set in place a framework to offer support to employees in addressing problems arising from domestic abuse, maximise the safety of our employees and deal effectively with perpetrators of domestic abuse among our workforce.

Local Arrangements

Across Northern Ireland there are five Area Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnerships. The SADSVP is made up of 23 members across 12 partner agencies including; Southern Trust Adult and Children Safeguarding leads, Training and Development Team, Mental Health Services, Principal Officer, Public Protection Arrangement, Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference Representative, PSNI, Women's Aid, Men's Advisory Project, Nexus, Probation, Police and Community Partnerships, Barnardos, Public Prosecution Service, Trade Unions and Victims Support.

The Southern Area Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse Partnership (SADSVP) brings together all statutory and non-statutory agencies, groups and individuals working to tackle domestic and sexual violence and abuse. Its purpose is to develop and deliver a high quality coordinated, multi-agency response for all victims of domestic and sexual violence and abuse. The Partnership is aligned to deliver on the Northern Ireland Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy and the subsequent 2023-2030 Strategy. The membership is comprised of a diverse community of multi-professional and agency individuals who have a shared responsibility, interest and drive to make positive changes to addressing domestic and sexual violence and abuse.

To achieve this the SADSVP aim is to:

- Improve services and support for all victims of domestic and sexual abuse.
- Increase and develop awareness generally about domestic and sexual abuse and the measures in place to help all victims.
- Educate children and young people and the wider public that domestic and sexual abuse is unacceptable and to enable them to make informed choices.
- Hold perpetrators accountable and provide effective interventions for their behaviours.
- Increase awareness across the Southern area about Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse and the services available for victims and children.

The SADSVP Action Plan is aligned to the regional strategy and includes areas for local development.

Local Developments

The Southern Area Domestic & Sexual Violence Partnership have pioneered a number of pilot projects:

- The pilot of the Identification and Referral to Improve Safety (IRIS) primary care project. This is held within GP practices and supported via Multi-Disciplinary Teams within the Community GP Practices.
- Piloted Operation Encompass within the Southern area which has subsequently been rolled out across the Southern Trust area and across Northern Ireland, providing information for sharing with pre-schools, schools, colleges in relation to incidents of domestic violence attended by PSNI. This has included provision of extensive training and awareness raising across key agencies and within schools. Between the launch of the pilot programme in September 2021 and April

2023, a total of 3160 Operation Encompass referrals have been made to schools.

- Safety and Healthy Relationships Advocate (SAHRA). Women's Aid have created a pilot project in conjunction with two post primary schools to respond to the needs of pupils and teaching staff. This pilot will seek to provide one to one specialist support to pupils with lived experience of domestic and sexual abuse, alongside specialist onsite Domestic and Sexual Abuse training for all school staff. We believe this pilot will compliment Operation Encompass, acting as the next tier of support for teachers and pupils.
- Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) The Southern Trust, in partnership with Police Service Northern Ireland, implemented the Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) Cadre approach to improve the standard and quality of ABE interview recordings through a smaller cadre of specially selected skilled and trained officers and social workers to conduct ABEs. Southern HSC Trust have refocused resources initially to pilot the ABE CADRE approach, this is now fully implemented within the SHSCT and PSNI in Southern Trust area. Children's Social Services within each Health and Social Care Trust to engaging in a process of implementing a Cadre approach to Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) Interviews, building upon the PSNI and SHSCT pilot.
- Remote Evidence Centres are operational in Belfast and Craigavon. These centres provide an important and welcome measure for vulnerable witnesses. SHSCT ABE Cadre have also implemented remote evidence interviews for children and young people, where interviews can be based on individual needs and can be held in, for example, the child's own home.
- An inter-departmental Barnahus Working Group that includes the Department of Justice and Department of Health has been established to consider a Barnahus (Children's House) model for Northern Ireland. This will help map any gaps in current health and justice service provision for children, benchmark services against the Barnahus standards and inform the consideration of potential options for improving the support and services available to child victims, in the context of the current financial position and subject to the priorities of an incoming Executive.
- Within the SHSCT, Domestic Abuse and Support Service (DASS) is in place within the acute hospitals, including a pilot of an out of hours service implemented for six-month in both DHH and CAH Emergency Departments. This pilot successfully ensured early intervention for victims of this crime and increased the safety for each woman who engaged. It also relieved the pressure on ED staff at peak times when the stretched services of our Emergency Departments needed specialist support. It is proposed to share the evaluation to seek funding to secure this much needed support to victims of domestic abuse.
- Engagement with voluntary and community sector re increasing awareness and support to victims of domestic and sexual violence; engagement via the councils with the night time economy re Ask for Angela, engagement via Trusts and Women's Aid with supermarkets, pharmacies, hairdressers and barbers re safe spaces and support to victims who present with concerns re domestic violence or abuse.

- Promoting Positive Relationships programme. This intensive behavioural change programme focused on men who perpetrate domestic abuse, is delivered in partnership with Probation NI, Women's Aid and SHSCT. It is now in Year 4 and it is anticipated that the programme will seek to secure recurrent funding going forward.

The group work programme offers a 26 week programme to men who have engaged in domestically abusive behaviours whom have not been adjudicated through the court process. The Southern Trust have 12 places available each year and over the past 4 years have held a waiting list for allocation, resulting in men being offered the opportunity in other Trust programmes where available. There is a gap in provision of the programme, as it does not cater for BME population who require interpretation service (verbal and/or written). The plan for year 5 was to increase funding to 18 places per Trust area, however recent communication has indicated there will be a reduced allocation of non-adjudicated group work programmes. This is currently subject of discussion with DoJ. An accredited evaluation of the above programme was completed, highlighting overall positive changes in behaviours, attitudes and thinking styles of participants who attended the programme. The Trust are collaborating with DoJ on a longitudinal evaluation of the programme in relation to recidivism and impact on care planning for families, including children and young people.

- Social media campaigns. The SADSVP, in conjunction with ABC and NMDD councils, have delivered social media campaigns over the Christmas period and mid-year focused on healthy relationships including the impact of domestic and sexual violence, technology aided abuse, mental health and have targeted campaigns to children and young people and platforms such as snap chat and TikTok which are accessed by young people.
- Every year between 25 November and 10 December, there is a period known as the 16 Days of Action against gender based violence. This year the Southern Area Partnership, alongside the South Eastern Trust Area Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse Partnership, are co-hosting a conference which will centre around Domestic Homicide Reviews in Northern Ireland and the impact of domestic abuse and homicide on children and families.
- Safe4U Service has been implemented within SHSCT, this includes supports for children and young people who engage in Harmful Sexual Behaviour and Child Sexual Abuse Recovery Support. This service model is in the early stages of development.
- SHSCT have coordinated a bespoke training session for international nursing staff within the Acute hospitals. The training includes three topics of discussion, Adult Protection, Domestic Abuse and Child Protection. Two sessions have been held to date.
- Delivery of Heading for Healthy Relationships & Helping Hands programmes in primary and post primary schools across SHSCT area.
- Participation in regional "Voice of Young People" project in partnership with SBNI, SHSCT and Women's Aid Federation, involving children and young people with lived experience.

- Partnership working with PSNI to incorporate digital based sexual abuse and crimes within the Heading for Healthy Relationship programme at post primary across Southern area.
- SHSCT continue to offer a fast track service into addiction services for victims of domestic abuse who are discussed at MARAC.
- SHSCT continue to progress the pilot project for offenders in PPANI which includes violent offenders. They are offered the Fast Track services if addiction has being a factor in their offending. It is hoped that early intervention will support the offender to avoid causing serious harm through re-offending.

Future Planning and Areas for Development

The SADSVP model work wells, with all partner agencies invested in driving forward change and innovation related to supporting victims of domestic and sexual abuse, including children. However there is a need for the Partnerships to be resourced with a coordinator and consideration of a dedicated chairperson to drive forward initiatives, and to hold all member agencies to account. This is being taken forward within the Stakeholder Assurance Group, however identifying an appropriate funding source is challenging.

There are significant gaps in holding perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence to account within the legal process and work is ongoing within the Department of Justice in this regard. However all agencies can play a role in developing a cultural change in society in relation to domestic and sexual violence. This could include the need for mandatory training within SHSCT to ensure that all employees are aware of the laws in relation to domestic abuse and have an awareness in relation to recognising domestic abuse and violence.

Further development is required regionally and locally in relation to the process for Domestic Homicide Reviews and sharing the learning from these reviews. Presently there are two published reviews and sharing the learning events have been held with the agencies involved in the DHR, however there is a need for learning to be shared across partner agencies including HSCTs. A review of the DHR process is being progressed by Department of Justice in consultation with key stakeholder agencies, including SHSCT.

Funding is a significant barrier to progressing supports and services for victims of domestic and sexual abuse. The 2016-23 Strategy was implemented with no funding aligned to the strategy. There is a need for the 2023-30 strategy to have funding aligned to support the progression of action plans. This is particularly concerning for community and voluntary organisation who have not had recurrent funding to support victims of abuse. This has been escalated to Stakeholders Assurance Group and Strategic Delivery Board.

CONCLUSION

This report to Trust Board demonstrates the ongoing commitment of the Social Work profession across all Directorates to fulfil their delegated statutory duties despite the existing challenges in relation to staff recruitment and retention, and increasing demand across Social Work services.

The overview of service provision in relation to domestic abuse provides assurance regarding the Trust's arrangements for responding to domestic abuse and protecting victims, including children who may be impacted upon.

The information outlines the prevalence of Domestic Abuse and how this manifests in Adult Safeguarding, Child Protection and Looked after Children services and impacts on practically all elements of the Trust's Health and Social Care delivery.

It is important to emphasise that effective identification of, and support to, victims is a multi-agency responsibility and the effective management of same will require further development and associated investments.

Colm McCafferty

Interim Director CYPS, SHSCT

Edenderry House, 18 Gilford Road, Portadown, BT63 5ED