

**Brighton & Hove City Council**

**Meeting: Community Safety Forum**

**Date of meeting: 14<sup>th</sup> December 2009**

**Subject: Dealing with Sexual Violence and Abuse.**

## **1.0 Introduction and Purpose of the Report**

1.1 Reducing those sexual violence and abuse is a priority within the Community Safety, Crime Reduction and Drugs Strategy 2008 -2011. The section of the Strategy which sets out the outcomes being sought and the actions being taken to achieve those outcomes is appended to this covering report. The purpose of this report is to inform the Forum about the action currently being taken to deal with sexual violence and abuse and to provide an opportunity for questions about this area of work. This priority crime area is to be the subject of Scrutiny in early 2010.

## **2.0 Information**

2.1 As stated, the attached section of the Strategy, describes the work being undertaken to deal with this important priority crime area which ranks within the 'serious crime' category. Sexual violence and abuse can occur in a domestic setting and/or in a public place and with such a broad definition (as set out overleaf) there are clearly many cross cutting issues to be brought into this area of work.

2.2 Partnership work reflects this broad agenda. Leadership in developing a force wide response to rape is by Sussex Police and senior police officers from Brighton & Hove, together with senior officers from the Crown Prosecution, Court and Health services meet regularly to co-ordinate investigative, judicial and preventative work across Sussex. The group also has oversight of service delivery of the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (a service for all of Sussex). The Head of Community Safety represents the local authority and CDRP on this group and one activity that is being taken forward, is ensuring, that Brighton & Hove third sector organisations are supported within the CDRP, to develop local, independent services for women. National and local research tells us that such services can be the catalyst for increasing the confidence of women to come forward and report crimes and

continued support through the criminal justice process increases the rate by which offenders are brought to justice.

2.3 The Brighton & Hove, Senior Officer Strategy Group for Domestic Violence includes within its area of responsibility, developing partnership activities to support the police in their responses to rape and sexual violence in a domestic setting. The Group, led by a senior police officer and supported by the Domestic Violence Co-ordinator in the Partnership Community Safety Team, is also taking the lead on partnership work to respond to forced marriage, honour killings and female genital mutilation. The Group which includes representatives from RISE and the community led Domestic Violence Forum also identifies and gives leadership too, specific activities undertaken by community based organisations which can protect women from these crimes.

2.4 The launch in late November of the governments Violence Against Women and Girls strategy, provides an opportunity for the CDRP to review its approaches and develop a more co-ordinated approach to combating all forms of violence against women. The national Strategy sets out a structure of working across three key areas, those of:

- Prevention – delivering an effective criminal justice system: investigation, prosecution, victim support, protection and perpetrator programmes
- Provision – helping women and girls continue with their lives; effective provision of services, advice and support, emergency and acute services, refuges and safe accommodation
- Prevention – changing attitudes and preventing violence; awareness raising campaigns, safeguarding and educating children and young people, early identification, intervention and training.

2.5 Working with partners in the City, particularly the specialist women's services such as the Women's Centre, RISE, Threshold, Oasis and Survivors Network, the CDRP have begun considering the detailed recommendations of the national strategy and will in the coming months, be making recommendations which take us closer to the development of a more co-ordinated approach to dealing with all forms of violence against women and girls. Other agencies such as Crime Reduction Initiatives and Brighton Housing Trust also have an important role to play in those developments.

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