

Meeting of:	<b>Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Wednesday, 12 January 2022</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Homes and Safe Communities
Report Title:	Update on the DAARC Service (Domestic Abuse Assessment and Referral Co-ordinator)
Purpose of Report:	To note the updates and progress on the DAARC service.
Report Owner:	Miles Punter - Director of Environment and Housing
Responsible Officer:	Deb Gibbs - Principal Community Safety Officer
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Cabinet Member for Legal, Regulatory and Planning Services Head of Housing and Building Services Finance Support Manager Principle Lawyer for Legal Services
Policy Framework:	This report is within the Policy Framework and Budget.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <p>This report shares progress from the Domestic Abuse Assessment and Referral Co-ordinator (DAARC) service. Regular updates have been provided to the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee since the DAARC's implementation in 2017. Annual updates have been agreed to enable elected Members to remain updated on progress and activity within the service.</p> <p>The report presents the performance data for Qtr 1 and Qtr 2 of the current financial year (April 2021- September 2021) for elected Members to have effective oversight of the performance of the DAARC service.</p>	

## **Recommendations**

1. That Committee notes the performance of the DAARC service for the period.
2. That Scrutiny considers the work undertaken to improve services for those affected by domestic abuse in the Vale.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

1. To provide Scrutiny with the information needed to exercise oversight of the DAARC service within Community Safety.
2. To ensure Members are aware of developments under the Violence Against Women Domestic and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) work programme.

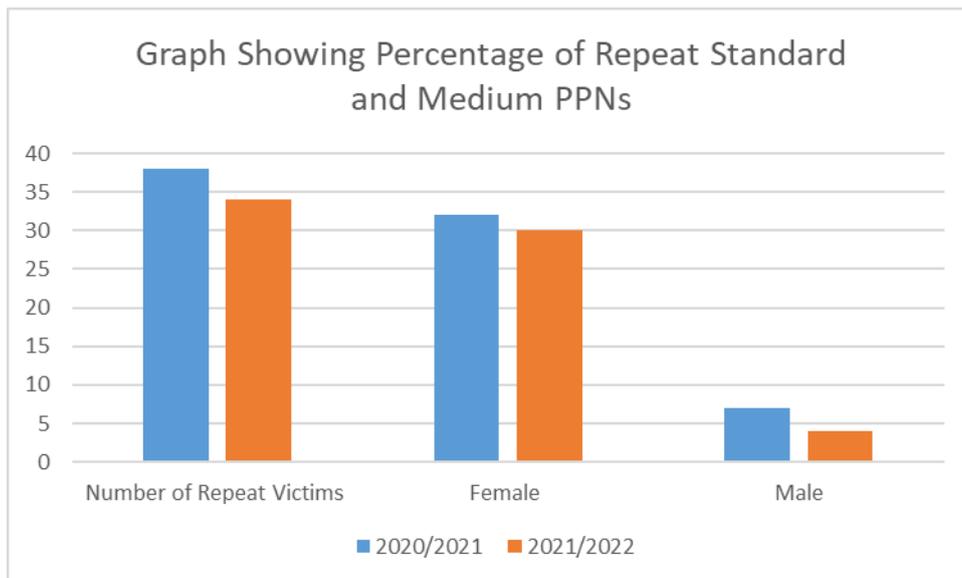
## **1. Background**

- 1.1 The DAARC service was launched in April 2018. Since its implementation, regular updates have been provided to the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.2 The DAARC service works in partnership with South Wales Police to receive all standard and medium risk domestic abuse Public Protection Notifications (PPNs). A PPN is the report created by a police officers each time they attend a domestic abuse incident. A 'standard' risk PPN is where there are no significant current indicators of risk of harm. A 'medium' risk is where there are identifiable indicators of risk of harm, the offender has potential to cause harm but is unlikely to do so unless there is a change in circumstance, for example, failure to take medication, loss of accommodation, relationship breakdown, drugs or alcohol misuse. A 'high' risk incident is where there are identifiable indicators of risk of serious harm, the potential event could happen at any time and the impact would be serious.
- 1.3 All 'high' risk incidents are assigned to the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) where a multi-agency approach is taken to creating a risk management plan.
- 1.4 The DAARC Co-ordinator works in partnership with other departments within the Local Authority, South Wales Police, Probation and third sector agencies to investigate a victim's current service involvement in order to work with them to develop a referral plan that is best suited to their needs and current situation.
- 1.5 The DAARC service has also demonstrated success in its ability to monitor trends and respond to needs, thanks to its excellent data recording system. Since its

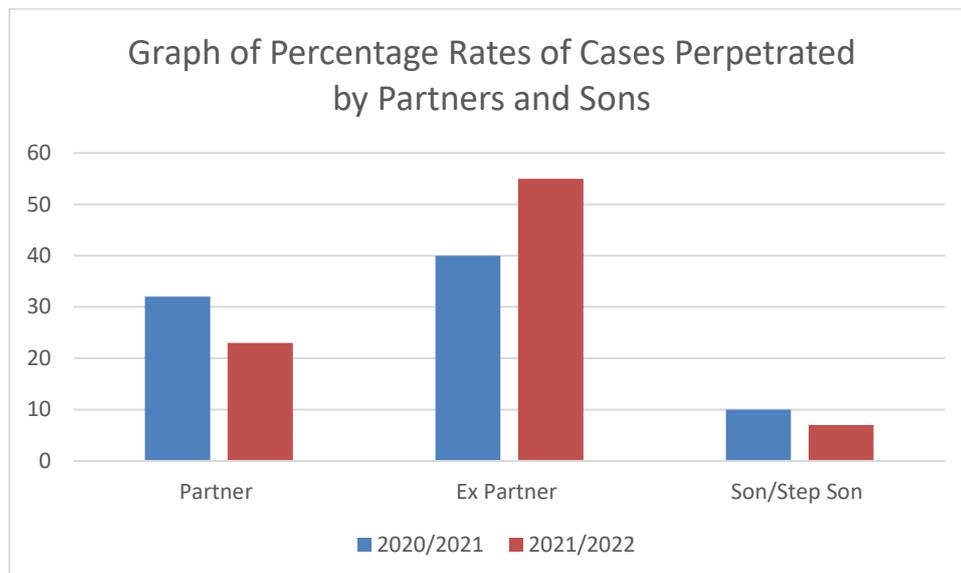
implementation the team has adapted to include better working protocols with housing, substance misuse and education services.

## **2. Key Issues for Consideration**

- 2.1** Across the first two quarters of 2021/22, there were 343 PPNs received and processed by the DAARC team. This compares with 838 PPNs received in the first two quarters of 2020.
- 2.2** This reduction in PPNs is a reflection of a change in protocol that occurred as a result of the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan South Wales Police merger. The merger resulted in the team receiving referrals from a new SWP Risk Assessment Team which took the decision to not share a PPN unless the victim's consent was provided. This was due to concern that sharing the information would be in breach of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).
- 2.3** This issue is currently being dealt with under the governance of the Community Safety Partnership. The Partnership are taking a joint approach to resolving these issues where currently, queries around data storage have been raised with South Wales Police headquarters.
- 2.4** The use of consent continues to be questioned by South Wales Police at a force wide level given the difficulties in obtaining reliable consent from a victim at a point of crisis.
- 2.5** In the last two quarters of 2020/2021 there were 366 referrals received indicating that the reduced figures from quarters one and two of 2021/2022 remain relatively comparable to the previous two quarters.
- 2.6** Of the 343 PPNs, 298 were medium risk and 18 were standard risk. At 87% and 12% respectively, this is comparable to the figures from the same quarters of the previous year, where 86% of the PPN referrals were of medium risk and 13% were standard. This indicates that there has been minimal change in the risk, as rated by SWP, of victims across the two years.
- 2.7** Across the two quarters, 34 % were repeat cases which compares with a 38% rate across the same time frame of the previous year. Of the repeat cases in 2021/2022, 30% were female victims and 4% were male victims which is in keeping with national trends and local expectations.



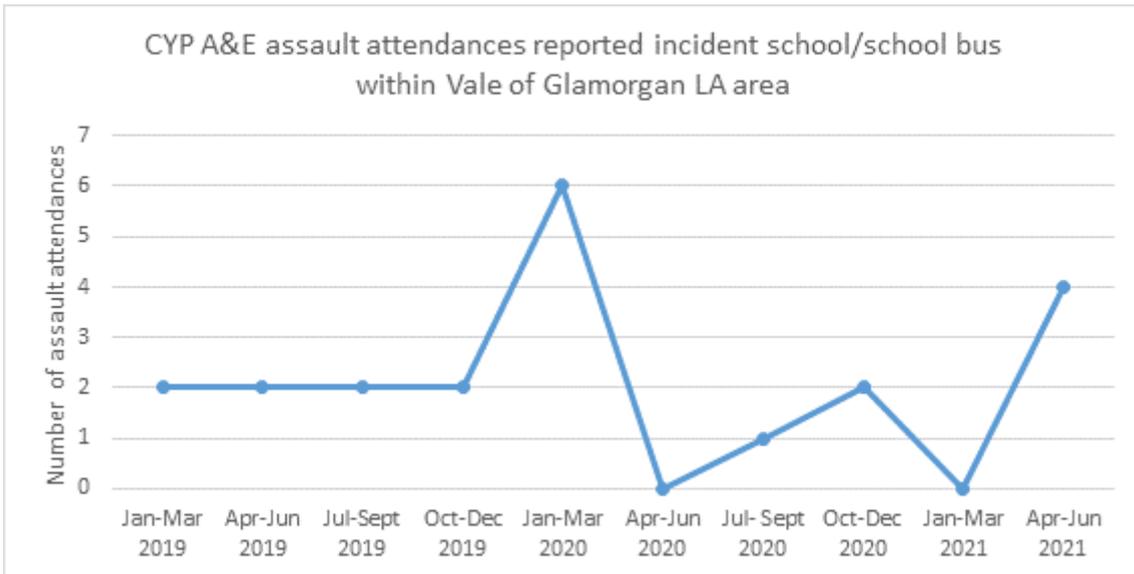
**2.8** Across the two quarters of 2021/2022 78% of cases were perpetrated by a partner or ex-partner and 7% were perpetrated by a son or stepson. This is relatively comparable with the previous year, where 72% were perpetrated by a partner or ex-partner and 10% were perpetrated by a son or stepson. These figures are being monitored as the son/stepson rates of perpetration have increased gradually over recent years. This trend is also being observed in the high-risk cases of domestic abuse.



**2.9** At the start of the pandemic meetings were held between Housing Officers, Atal y Fro and Children's Services to closely monitor trends and data in order to be ready to respond to any consequences of the lockdown and restrictions. The main concerns were that victims were suddenly finding themselves locked into an environment with their perpetrators, unable to leave abusive environments and without the flexibility they might previously have had. It was anticipated that

because of this, there would be a need to provide additional refuge accommodation for individuals fleeing their abuser. It was also anticipated that the additional stresses caused by the global pandemic, both in terms of worries relating to people's health and the stresses associated with the new, more isolated ways of working and living, would increase pressure on relationships and increase domestic abuse. These meetings have now ceased given that normal working practices have resumed, however communication channels between these services have remained enhanced with a more frequent dialogue ensuring that any changes, trends, or issues are picked up swiftly.

- 2.10** 18% of domestic abuse victims were Vale of Glamorgan Council tenants over the first two quarters of 2021/2022 which is the same percentage as the numbers recorded for the same time frame of the previous year. Developments across the quarter have included an information sheet (attached at Appendix A) to Housing colleagues to help share pertinent information on the number and characteristics of domestic abuse perpetrated within housing stock. This information sharing is intended to help provide a more complete and formalised summary of issues affecting a tenant's life to help in decision making, tailoring of support offered and in the identifying of trends that could improve or inform service design and delivery.
- 2.11** Across the two quarters, the impact of COVID was monitored. Figures indicate that COVID was not cited as a significant or direct factor in any of the cases received by the DAARC co-ordinator across the two quarters.
- 2.12** The Community Safety Team has been working with the Violence Prevention Unit following research that indicates there has been an increase in violence in school settings that is thought to be linked to increases in exposure to violence in the home during the lockdown periods. Figures from the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board Emergency Unit that relate specifically to the Vale show an increase in admissions from assault in a school setting, but the figures are very low and it is therefore hard to infer any statistical significance (graph below). Conversations are being had with the Education Department to investigate any increasing trends in aggression or violence in schools.



- 2.13** A task and finish group to look at domestic abuse and children’s safeguarding has been created in response to this and in response to concerns that there might not be sufficient and appropriate service provision to meet the demand for children exposed to domestic abuse across the Vale. The task and finish group are scrutinising data sets to ensure that the impact of domestic abuse on children is being effectively captured and are reviewing service provision across the Vale ahead of presenting a review of the findings. This relates to the trend indicated by data mentioned in 2.8 regarding the increased rates of perpetration of domestic abuse by sons and stepsons.
- 2.14** One change as a result of these meetings is in the way in which information is collected regarding children. The team now collect data that specifies the type of contact had with social services (for those open to children’s services) and whether the children have been repeat cases across the quarter and the year. This helps in ensuring that figures relating to children are not double counted and monitoring open status with children’s services will help to monitor trends and better understand the safeguarding issues.
- 2.15** At the start of the financial year a review of the data collected has resulted in the service collecting information to review the mechanisms for monitoring the impact of domestic abuse on ethnicity and disability. This will enable closer scrutiny of whether the percentage of individuals with these protected characteristics are proportionately reflected in referrals given population prevalence and other prevalence expectations.
- 2.16** In relation to other developments across the Violence against Women Domestic and Sexual Violence agenda, the team have continued to deliver the National Training Framework with a number of individuals from both the Local Authority and the Health board trained across the two quarters. This training is increasing

the awareness of domestic abuse to aid identification and ability to refer on to support services if and when appropriate.

- 2.17** The tendering for the recommissioning of VAWDASV services was successful and a three-year contract was awarded to Atal y Fro. The Community Safety Team, Ministry of Justice and Supporting People are currently working together with Atal y Fro, on the development of the performance frameworks to effectively monitor the service.
- 2.18** Additional funding awarded to increase the number of Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) working across the Vale has continued to provide successful outcomes. This is a successful improvement in the capacity to support high risk victims of domestic abuse. The IDVAs supporting victims work closely with the new DRIVE programme, working with perpetrators of high risk cases of domestic abuse, and together they work to improve outcomes through a more 'whole system' approach.
- 2.19** During the reporting period, 43 applications were made to Clare's Law. This increase from the same reporting period of the previous year is a positive indication that the increased awareness raising of Clare's law is having an effect and that those at risk of being victims are coming forward to make use of this powerful safeguarding tool.

### **3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?**

- 3.1** Long Term: The DAARC service is one that focuses on improving outcomes now to create a benefit for the long-term future of victims of domestic abuse. The service works with victims holistically in order to provide suitable care at the earliest point so that victims don't experience higher risk incidents of domestic abuse later on, which is both significantly harmful for them and their families and significantly resource intensive for services which are left dealing with victims with more developed, more complex issues and at a point of crisis.
- 3.2** Preventative: The service works with victims of domestic abuse who have been identified as standard and medium risk, to provide the right support by the right service early on in order to reduce the likelihood of another incident occurring at a higher risk rating.
- 3.3** Integration & Collaboration: The service works in partnership with other departments of the Local Authority as well as considering the well-being objectives of external partners who are fully integrated in the service in order to provide a more holistic and appropriate level of care to those who need support.
- 3.4** Involvement: Victims of Domestic Abuse were consulted during the planning and development of the DAARC service. Victims are encouraged to provide feedback

on the service received once they have completed their involvement with the DAARC.

- 3.5** The proposal evidences a contribution to the wellbeing objective "Providing decent homes and safe communities" by addressing the needs of victims of domestic abuse.

## **4. Resources and Legal Considerations**

### **Financial**

- 4.1** There are no direct financial implications arising as a result of this report.

### **Employment**

- 4.2** There are no direct employment implications arising from this report.

### **Legal (Including Equalities)**

- 4.3** The Community Safety team has several functions. The DAARC service assists the Council in meeting some of its obligations under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, The Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act (Wales) 2015 and the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- 4.4** The service is available to all victims within the Vale of Glamorgan.

## **5. Background Papers**

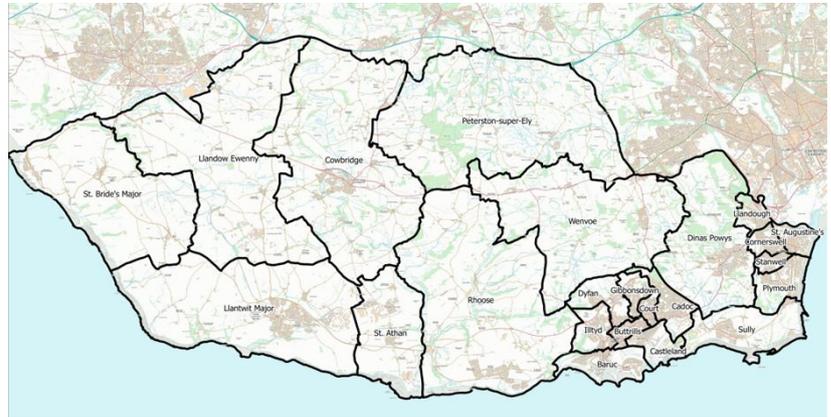
None.

# DAARC Housing Tenants

During August 2021 we received 61 PPNs (Public Protection Notices) from the police, 9 of these victims were council tenants. All of the tenants had children which resulted in 32 children witnessing Domestic Violence.

## Ward Profiles

- 5 reside in Gibbonsdown
- 2 reside in Court
- 1 reside in Cadoc
- 1 reside in St Athan



## Relationship between victim & perpetrator

- 6 were ex-partners
- 3 were partners

## Home Security

During August we target hardened 6 DAARC clients who reside in a council property. This included;



- Change of locks
- Window locks
- Window shock alarms
- Personal panic alarms
- Door chains

**You can make a target hardening referral directly into the Safer Vale. Please contact Rebecca Lane & Julie Grady for further details**

## What further support is available?

- **Atal y Fro** - Can support victims of domestic abuse. If you have concerns you can refer directly into their service.
- **Clare's Law**—if you are aware a tenant has started a new relationship and have concerns as professionals you can apply to the Police for your tenant to receive a disclosure.

**From the end of September Amy Watkins will be going on maternity leave. Molly Watts will be covering and can be contacted on 01446 450200 or**

