

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
ADULT AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE
CRIMINAL JUSTICE SUB COMMITTEE

Minutes of Meeting of the Criminal
Justice Sub-Committee held in
Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart
Road, Inverness on Tuesday 11
March, 2014 at 10.30am.

PRESENT

Mrs M Davidson
Ms J Douglas
Mr M Green
Mr G MacKenzie

Mrs M Paterson
Mr G Ross
Ms M Smith

Officials in attendance:-

Ms F Palin, Head of Social Care, Health and Social Care Service
Mr G Greenlees, MARAC Co-ordinator, Health and Social Care Service
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Service

Also in Attendance:

Ms C Russell, Inverness Women's Aid

Mr G MacKenzie in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A Christie and Ms L Munro.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Performance Report – Quarter 2 Northern Community Justice Authority & Quarter 3 The Highland Council 2013/14

There was circulated Report No CJ/01/14 by the Director of Health and Social Care which provided the most recently available performance and monitoring information for Criminal Justice Services. This covered Quarter 2 2013/14 and Quarter 3 2013/14 as reported to the Northern Community Justice Authority and The Highland Council respectively.

The performance report was linked to the wider objectives of community safety and public protection; the reduction of re-offending, and social inclusion to support desistance from offending. In relation to Quarter 3 performance data it was reported that 96% of Criminal Justice Social Work reports were submitted on time; 80% of offenders were seen within a week of the Order being made; 3.5 was the average number of hours per week taken to complete unpaid work; and 96% of sex offenders had their Order/licence reviewed as scheduled.

It was advised that offenders undertaking community payback work orders completed a questionnaire and feedback from this was used in order to measure improvements in a number of areas of offenders lives. One of the challenges was to increase the number of offenders completing the questionnaires and time would need to be spent with them to encourage them to do so.

Reference was made to the amount of time it took to complete unpaid work orders and that it was better for the outcomes if less time was taken to do this. It was advised that there were various reasons for this for example a person could be in employment or had health problems, which would explain the delays. In relation to people who had work orders, they attended a range of placements including individual placements in the third sector.

It was requested that information on the budget for the Northern Community Justice Authority be provided for Members. It was noted that there would be a reduction in the budget for Highland Council's Criminal Justice Service in 2015/16.

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the report and that information on the budget for the Northern Community Justice Authority would be submitted to a future meeting.

4. Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferencing (MARAC)

There was circulated Report No CJ/02/14 by the Director of Health and Social Care which outlined the development of Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) in Highland and gave information on cases referred to MARAC across the area.

Mr G Greenlees, MARAC Co-ordinator was in attendance and gave a presentation on MARAC. It was advised that MARAC was a new way of working to transform the lives of vulnerable victims who are assessed to be of high risk of domestic abuse. MARACs were regular local meetings where information about high risk domestic abuse victims (those at risk of murder or serious harm) was shared between local agencies – Police, Social Care, Health, Child Protection, Housing, Women's Aid, Substance Misuse Services, Criminal Justice etc. By bringing all agencies together at a MARAC, and ensuring that whenever possible the voice of the victim was represented by an independent Domestic Abuse Advocate, a risk focused, co-ordinated safety plan could be drawn up to support the victim. The presentation detailed how MARAC works, its aims, how these were achieved, and the strategic and local governance arrangements for MARAC. Ms C Russell, Inverness Women's Aid gave an overview of Women's Aid role in this process and highlighted the benefits of MARAC in dealing with domestic abuse.

There then followed a question and answer session during which it was suggested that all Highland Council Members should be given this presentation as the high number of incidents of domestic abuse and the number of children caught up in domestic abuse households was very alarming. Domestic abuse occurred in all areas of society and it was of vital importance that there was a support network there for victims. In 2013 there had been 436 high risk referrals to MARAC, of which 30% of referrals were repeat cases. The number of children in domestic abuse households had been 504 and there had been 1,591 multi agency actions raised which was challenging for agencies to cope with. There was no statutory requirement for MARAC and limited additional funding for its work and therefore there was a capacity issue in terms of staffing resources. It was suggested that the profile of MARAC could be raised by having a Highland MARAC day to promote the scheme. Reference was made to an EU-wide Survey on violence

against women and it was requested that the survey be sent to Members for information.

It was advised that the Scottish Government were working on a new Violence against Women Strategy in partnership with COSLA and there was guidance about prevention and wider community engagement to tackle this issue in the strategy. It was hoped that at the end of the consultation there would be recognition of the need to standardise the work of MARAC across Scotland with equitable service provision across all areas.

The Chair on behalf of the Sub-Committee thanked Mr Greenlees for his informative presentation, and the Sub-Committee **NOTED** the development of MARAC across Highland and that a further report on this would be submitted to a future meeting.

5. Tackling the Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse – the Perpetrator Programme and Multi Agency in Highland Tasking and Coordinating Meetings

There was circulated Report No CJ/03/14 by the Director of Health and Social Care which explained the development and implementation of a programme for perpetrators of domestic abuse delivered by Criminal Justice Social Work in Highland and the establishment of MATAC – Multi Agency Tasking and Coordinating Meeting for Domestic Abuse – led by Police Scotland.

It was advised that the programme for perpetrators in Highland could be delivered on a 1:1 basis and was based on an analysis of the distorted thought patterns, assumptions, standards and beliefs which contribute to the use of violence and abuse. The Criminal Justice Service delivered the perpetrator programme and Women's Aid provided support to partners and had agreed a joint protocol to ensure the programme was delivered effectively. The programme was implemented Highland-wide in September, 2011 and was targeted at offenders subject to statutory supervision where the index offence was domestic violence. It was now well established across the Criminal Justice Service in Highland.

It was explained that MATAC meetings were the process for managing the risk presented by the most serious perpetrators of domestic violence. All Police Scotland Divisions now had MATACs in place, and deployed additional resources such as the Domestic Abuse Task Force. The MATAC in Highland was established in 2013 and currently had considered 14 offenders. Representatives from a range of support agencies attended meetings.

It was advised that a common cause of child deaths was a violent offender going back to a family or starting a new relationship with a partner and their family. One of the key benefits of MATAC was looking at the offenders history of previous partners and risk assessments were undertaken. At present offenders on the programme were those who were subject to statutory orders and one of the areas that would be looked at was offenders coming onto the programme on a voluntary basis.

The Sub-Committee **NOTED**:

- i the domestic violence perpetrator programme and associated women's service delivered by the Criminal Justice Service and Women's Aid respectively; and
- ii the implementation of MATAC.

The meeting ended at 11.45 a.m.