

# Summary of proposals to develop support services for victims of sexual abuse

## Introduction

Leicester City Council is working with our partners, including the NHS and police, to develop a strategy to encourage a more preventative approach to the problem of sexual abuse and to make sure that people affected by sexual violence get the right support at the right time.

We would like to hear your views about this.

## Details

### Issue/problem

Sexual violence is a complex issue often further compounded by the hidden nature of offending.

Sexual violence is known to be widely under-reported, with only one in ten adult victims of serious sexual assault reporting the incident to police.

It is estimated that 20% of women and 3% of men have suffered a sexual assault since the age of 16.

While there are many positive aspects to the support currently available to tackle sexual abuse, we have also identified a number of areas for improvement:

- Consistent commitment needed to service provision
- Strategic approach required
- Need to reduce duplication of services
- Need to promote a single pathway
- Need for better joining up and partnership
- Need to encourage and support people accessing
- Better substance use support for victims and perpetrators
- Raise awareness of sexual abuse and promote provision
- Need to increase preventative work around sexual abuse

We have also considered the pressing need to ensure value for money and to co-ordinate and align new and existing services wherever possible.

Further information is available in the detailed needs assessment.

## Summary of proposals and the reasons for them

### Service development objectives

We are aiming to refocus the budget for sexual abuse services, concentrating more on prevention and early intervention, and developing services which are easier to access and understand, and which are more flexible to the needs of our diverse community.

#### *Prevention*

A variety of initiatives to prevent and reduce sexual violence have been trialled in the UK and elsewhere. Programmes which have shown good evidence of effectiveness include education programmes aimed at young people promoting healthy relationships. For example, the Safe Dates programme in the USA targets 12-18 year olds and aims to develop relationship skills (e.g. conflict resolution), address social norms (e.g. dating violence, gender stereotypes) and raise awareness of support services for those affected by violence. It has been found to reduce perpetration of sexual, physical and psychological violence against dating partners, with some benefits also seen in reducing victimisation.

Many reports now show the benefit of early intervention, and interventions which work with everyone affected by the sexual abuse.

#### *New ways of working*

Psychological treatments aim to address the emotional and mental health problems that result from violence. For example, early trauma-focused cognitive behavioural therapy can prevent chronic post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and has been found to be more effective than other types of counselling. Psychotherapy can also improve mental health among adults and children who have suffered childhood sexual abuse.

Psychological care and support counselling, therapy and support group initiatives have been found to be helpful following sexual assaults, especially where there may be complicating factors related to the violence itself or the process of recovery.

Sensitive management of victims and successful prosecution of perpetrators are important factors in encouraging victims of sexual violence to report the offence to the police.

Leicester is a very diverse city and to have a 'one size fits all' approach to specialist services for vulnerable groups such as 'black and minority ethnic' communities or women, is restrictive and possibly equally at risk of failing to protect those most in need as so called 'generic' provision which is open to all. We wish to see more flexible, skilled and knowledgeable provision across the sexual abuse services we contract.

## Summary of proposals and the reasons for them

### Proposals

Following discussion with delivery organisations and other partners, the city council is proposing the following changes:

1. To introduce a single telephone helpline
2. To standardise risk assessment and referral processes
3. To introduce provision which aims to prevent further incidents of sexual abuse
4. To extend the provision of emotional support, advice and information to individuals who have experienced rape or sexual assault
5. To introduce provision of therapeutic services aimed at individuals who have experienced rape or sexual assault
6. To introduce the monitoring of outcomes for individuals in receipt of support
7. To contract for provision that caters for all people, irrespective of their background, rather than contracting separately for particular groups (e.g. BMER, LGBT)
8. To develop and deliver a training package for frontline health and social care staff

### **Action plan**

<b>Key action</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Dates</b>
Implement agreed changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improved access to support for people affected by sexual violence</li><li>• Improved awareness of where to go for help</li><li>• More responsive support for those who reach out for help</li><li>• More effective care to support the process of recovery and prevent chronic PTSD</li><li>• Health and social care professionals better equipped to detect signs of sexual abuse and signpost to relevant provision</li><li>• More collaborative working between organisations and agencies involved in the support of people affected by sexual violence</li></ul>	June 2013 to March 2015

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