

The Vale of Glamorgan Council

Cabinet Meeting: 19th November, 2018

Report of the Cabinet Member for Housing and Building Services

Target Hardening to the Homes of Victims of Domestic Abuse

Purpose of the Report

1. To advise Cabinet of the outcomes achieved by the Target Hardening Service in 2017/18 and to seek permission to allocate additional funding to enable the service to continue.

Recommendations

1. That the outcomes detailed in this report be noted.
2. That Housing Services allocate continuation funding of £35,000 as a one off payment to the Target Hardening Project subject to satisfactory performance outcomes.

Reasons for the Recommendations

1. For information.
2. To give stability to a service that is providing additional protection to victims of domestic abuse and their families who wish to remain in their own home.

Background

2. Violence against women, domestic abuse (including physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or financial abuse) is a significant problem in Wales. Domestic abuse is the most prevalent form of violence and estimates show that domestic abuse affects 11% of women and 5% of men and sexual violence affects 3.2% of women and 5% of men each year in Wales (Robinson et al. 2012).
3. In the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff region in 2016/17 there were a total of 11,302 incidents of domestic abuse reported, with a total of 5,067 (45%) recorded as crimes, 1,230 of which were in the Vale of Glamorgan. These crimes were assault, harassment, stalking, coercive control and threats to kill.
4. Homelessness presentations resulting from domestic abuse for both genders continue to increase and whilst there is a five unit Refuge and six unit second stage Refuge, as well as a dispersed supported housing scheme for those who have experienced or who are in danger of experiencing domestic abuse, these are more

often than not full. This means that not everyone is able to access the specialist accommodation when they need it, with some having to access Refuge provision outside of the Vale of Glamorgan, away from their extended families and support networks, whilst others had to be placed in temporary accommodation by the Housing Solutions Service.

5. Most of the homelessness presentations and refuge admissions also include the children of the victim, resulting in then suffering distress and disruption to their lives, by being placed in temporary accommodation away from their friends, families and schools. Several research projects undertaken over the last decade have shown that children who live with domestic abuse are at increased risk of behavioural problems, emotional trauma and mental health difficulties.

Relevant Issues and Options

6. In the Vale of Glamorgan, many victims of domestic abuse have indicated that if they were able to feel safer, they would prefer to remain in their own home and avoid the disruption to their lives caused by moving. Some victims who have moved from their homes also experienced limited protection, as they were found again after a period of time by the perpetrator and the cycle of fear and abuse begun again.
7. It was for this reason that Cabinet approved the setting up of a Target Hardening Service which commenced in 2012 (Cabinet Minutes C1554 13th December 2011 refers) managed by the Community Safety Team to fund the installation of security equipment to homes. The list of devices is extensive and includes locks, bolts, door chains and mirrors, mailsafe letterboxes, fire safety equipment, personal and property alarm, and security lighting. This work is carried out under a Service Level Agreement (SLA) by the Council's Building Services Team. In addition a local private company, Vale of Glamorgan Security, is contracted to fit CCTV and intruder alarms to high risk victims' homes.
8. In 2015 Cabinet approved continuation funding for the service as it has proved to be cost effective and prevents the need for victims to move or to access costly temporary accommodation, bed and breakfast or a refuge space. .
9. During the 2017/18 financial year, sixty-nine homes were fitted with additional security. Referrals for the Service were received from a number of sources including the Police, the Safer Vale Partnership, Atal y fro, the victims, housing associations and private landlords. A breakdown of tenures, ages and areas are listed below.

Tenure:

Council	19
Private rental	19
Owner occupied	15
Housing Association	16

Age ranges of clients:

18-24	10
25-34	28
35-44	17
45-54	9

55-64	3
65-74	2

Area of home:

St Athan	3
Eglwys Brewis	1
Rhoose	1
Ogmore	1
Barry	46
Sully	1
Dinas Powys	4
Llantwit Major	5
Penarth	6
St Brides Major	1

10. It is estimated that over the period, the Target Hardening Service has in addition to providing stability to families at a difficult time of their lives realised significant savings for the Council. This is based on the following assumptions:

Rent loss for each Council property (19 in total) over 2.64 weeks (average void period) @ £110 per week average rent = £5,517.60

Cost of bed and breakfast accommodation @ £420 per week (£60 per night average cost) for an average period of six weeks for 69 households = £173,880 (This is based on only one room, bigger families would have required additional rooms).

Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)

11. It is proposed that the Housing Service commits an additional £35,000 from the General Fund to sustain and support this service for the next few years.

Sustainability and Climate Change Implications

12. Allowing victims of domestic abuse to demonstrate greater choice in their surroundings and safety arrangements provides for more reliable and sustainable outcomes.

Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)

13. A Service Level Agreement is in place between the Community Safety and Building Services Teams to carry out the majority of the target hardening work and a legal contract has been put in place following advice from Legal Services between Vale of Glamorgan Security and the Community Safety Team to fit the intruder alarms and CCTV where required for high risk cases.

Crime and Disorder Implications

14. The continued availability of safeguards to ensure the safety and security of victims of domestic abuse will have a positive effect on crime and disorder in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)

15. The additional security equipment provided through the Target Hardening Service is available to both male and female victims of domestic abuse, in accommodation of all tenures and throughout the Vale of Glamorgan, thus ensuring equality of access to all.

Corporate/Service Objectives

16. The Target Hardening Service is consistent with the Corporate Plan 2016-20.

Wellbeing Outcome 1: An inclusive and safe Vale

Objective 2: Provide decent homes and safe communities.

In addition it helps to meet Aim 4 of the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse, and Sexual Violence Strategy 2018-2013:

Aim 4 PROTECT: Improve the multi-agency response and support to all victims and their children regardless of risk level and need.

Policy Framework and Budget

17. This report is a matter for Executive Decision by Cabinet.

Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)

18. This service is available to all victims of domestic abuse throughout the Vale of Glamorgan; therefore no individual ward member consultation has been undertaken.

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

19. Homes and Safe Communities.

Background Papers

Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse, and Sexual Violence Strategy 2018-2013.

Contact Officer

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Officers Consulted

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Committee Reports

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Responsible Officer:

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