

Domestic Abuse Campaign Briefing November 2014

Background

The champs public health collaborative service is funded by the Cheshire & Merseyside Local Authorities and led by the nine Directors of Public Health, delivering key areas of work through local public health teams and a small support team hosted by Wirral Council. This collaboration builds on 10 years of successful joint work in the NHS.

The Directors of Public Health have agreed that domestic abuse should be the focus of a 2014/15 campaign as it is a significant public health issue, having a major impact upon those directly affected and their families. Domestic abuse affects one in three women and one in five men¹. Two women a week are killed in a domestic abuse incident every year in the UK.

Table 1: Number of domestic abuse¹ incidents recorded by the police, by police force area, English regions and Wales, 2007/08 to 2012/13

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Cheshire	4,872	5,606	5,648	5,887	4,186	4,537
Cumbria	4,998	4,718	5,279	6,455	6,422	6,563
Greater Manchester	..	69,334	65,897	..	47,496	57,622
Lancashire	22,953	25,413	27,604	27,615	29,465	30,505
Merseyside	29,033	30,169	27,319	31,069	32,511	33,261
North West Region	61,856	135,240	131,747	71,026	120,080	132,488

Source: Police incident data, Home Office, Table 4.07, Focus on: Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2012/13 - Appendix Tables <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcn%3A77-328149>

However, these figures represent just the tip of the iceberg. There are issues with defining, recording and reporting domestic abuse and it is accepted that incidents are more frequent than the number of police call outs imply. It is estimated that a domestic abuse incident is first reported to Police only after 30 previous incidents.

Rationale and evidence

Domestic abuse is complex, with an individual's risk determined by a range of inter-related factors which are also causes of health inequalities, so primary prevention - reducing risk factors or altering behaviours to reduce incidence - is complex. In addition, primary prevention has the least evidence of effective

¹ Flatley, J. (2013) Focus on: Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2011/12. Office for National Statistics and Home Office Joint Statistical Bulletin, Office for National Statistics, London.

interventions because of the difficulty in measuring impact. To date, campaigns have tended to have a natural focus on support for victims or a criminal justice response against perpetrators, leaving a gap for a campaign from a health perspective which will allow us to further highlight the scale and wider health and wellbeing impact, including preventable 'exacerbating factors'.

Piloting the approach

A successful Phase I campaign was run in Knowsley over the World Cup period in 2014. It is well established that domestic abuse incidents increase at the time of mass sporting events such as football matches. The effect is exacerbated by alcohol use and increases further when a home team loses. Champs and Knowsley Council ran a pilot incubator campaign in Knowsley in June/July 2014 linked to the World Cup. The campaign introduced and tested this new public health angle, citing hard hitting statistics about the scale of domestic abuse and adapting the US 'Hurt Words' campaign²

Figure 1: Z-cards used in the Knowsley domestic abuse pilot, June 2014



Qualitative research carried out through two focus groups after the campaign found that people were pleased that the issue was being highlighted but confirmed that there is low awareness and understanding of the term 'domestic abuse'. In terms of prevention, messages linked to children were deemed the most powerful, which reflects existing literature.

In addition, professionals working in the field agree that there is still a need to raise awareness of the scale and nature of the issue within communities before we can start to facilitate the sustained cultural changes required. Whilst on a population level, exacerbating factors such as alcohol use may be highlighted, too much emphasis on these as a 'cause' was not advised, for risk of perpetrators deferring responsibility.

More information about this Knowsley pilot Phase I is available online³

Campaign overview

A campaign focusing on domestic abuse from a public health perspective will run in Q4 of 2014/15 across the nine Cheshire & Merseyside Local Authority areas. This is likely to launch at the end of January 2015.

² <http://hurtwords.com/about>

³ <http://www.champspublichealth.com/news/knowsley-public-health-team-say-no-injury-time>

In addition to educating, the broad aim will be to reduce the acceptability of domestic abuse – to take steps to ‘de-normalise’ domestic abuse amongst the public, who will be engaged to offer their support for measures to tackle domestic abuse in communities. The campaign development is based on the insight that:

- There is low understanding of the nature/prevalence/latest definition (including psychological abuse and coercive control)
- Domestic abuse is seen as a private issue - so do not intervene; there may be repercussions
- There exists a broad acceptance that domestic abuse is the social norm in some communities
- The default opinion is that domestic abuse is mainly in “working class women”.
- People do want domestic abuse to reduce.

Running alongside this will be work to support all Local Authorities to embed commitment to policies which tackle domestic abuse within their areas through multi-agency working and to collectively build a stronger ground swell of support for measures to tackle domestic abuse locally, regionally and nationally.

Evaluation

Pre and post campaign research will be used to both further inform and provide some feedback on the campaign, alongside usual campaign metrics. This will:

1. gather data on awareness and understanding of domestic abuse and its scale and impact,
2. gather data on opinions about and attitudes towards domestic abuse in communities,
3. examine individual self-reported behaviour around domestic abuse and incentives/barriers to change behaviour,
4. assess the potential for public action to support measures to reduce domestic abuse locally.

Considerations

Significant and successful campaign and intervention work continues to be delivered locally across all Cheshire & Merseyside areas, including the successful White Ribbon Campaign. This campaign is designed with this in mind – to complement and enhance local work without duplicating or conflicting. Champs will continue to liaise with partners to ensure the campaign complements these other approaches.

Current position and next steps

This month, quantitative research is taking place to establish awareness/attitudes towards domestic abuse in Cheshire & Merseyside; first wave results will be available in December to inform the creative and campaign plans. Further updates will be circulated before launch.

The campaign is scheduled to launch in late January 2015.

Contacts

If you would like to find out more or become more involved in this campaign work, please get in touch

For further information on this campaign, please contact **Pippa Sargent** pippasargent@wirral.gov.uk, **Suzanne McGuckin** suzannemcguckin@wirral.gov.uk or call 0151 666 5123.

Notes on Champs

The aim of the Cheshire & Merseyside public health collaborative service is to improve the quality of public health services, increase value for money and achieve better health outcomes for local communities. It does this by sharing goals, resources and expertise. The collaborative service has a long standing and award-winning social marketing and communications programme managed by a commissioner-led working group.

For more information on the Cheshire & Merseyside public health collaborative service visit www.champspublichealth.com