

## SWACA's perspective on Violence against Women and Girls in Sefton

*Sefton Safer Together Partnership 17<sup>th</sup> March 2022*

SWACA exists to support Women and Children / Young People, in Sefton, affected by domestic abuse (DA). Violence against Women and Girls, while a broader theme than DA alone, is an issue very close to our hearts and one that pervades all aspects of our support work. Without a given definition, we have included all aspects of domestic abuse within the theme, as referenced in definitions within UK Government documentation.

### • SWACA's experiences of Violence against Women and Girls

- SWACA staff address the impact of DA related Violence against Women and Girls daily – Physical, Sexual, Emotional, Economic Abuse, Coercion and Control and combinations
- Significant concerns around high risks - multiple on-going DHR's
- Referrals to SWACA remain very high and increasing (400 across Jan / Feb)
- Risk of children / young people, (particularly male), with either learned behaviour, or with specific additional needs, engaging in abusive behaviours – Child on Parent Violence / Abuse (CoPVA) Project
- Female victims / survivors resulting from relationships with male OCG / gang members
- Housing concerns – victims / survivors relocation needs (DA Act 2021) and sustainability of Dispersed Housing Programme?
- Court system concerns – backlog in securing DA related orders due to COVID-19 and level of understanding within the criminal justice system re: issues such as coercion and control
- Major prosecution challenges - proving coercion and control and sexual violence towards Women
- Re: perpetrators
  - SWACA sense of rising male aggression (general cultural issue?)
  - rise in ex-military perpetrators – PTSD related
  - wider impact of substance misuse and mental health (toxic trio)
- Education around healthy relationships is essential!!
- Media – concerns re: normalising Violence against Women and Girls and influence on future perpetrators
- (National) concerns re: knife and gun crime – driving more 'extreme' violence / abuse

### • SWACA 'actions' put in place to deal with Violence against Women and Girls

- SWACA range of services focused on addressing, and mitigating against risks of, the impact of DA
- SWACA's role in educating local communities re: DA and Healthy Relationships etc.
- Safety Planning – enabling Women and Girls to mitigate against risks of Violence against Women and Girls but without placing responsibility on victims / survivors – perpetrators are responsible
- Establishing specific projects to ensure greater depth in understanding of DA – e.g., CoPVA
- Lots of partnership activity – e.g., development of public health funded digital work with SWAN / Venus
- Successful engagement with Schools and Colleges (within capacity limitations)
- Support groups and work focusing on building sustainable peer / family networks of support
- Media engagement around DA

### • Any barriers to achieving success

- Resources - SWACA keen to establish more specific projects tackling Violence Against Women and Girls from a DA perspective (focus on Older People, Sibling Abuse, increased Mental Health specialists, Health)
- Resources - SWACA keen to expand engagement with High Schools around PSHE and Healthy Relationships, (recent success with Deyes High / Merchant Taylors)
- COVID-19 impacts – increased pressures on intimate / family relationships, and dependency on perpetrator
- Cultural diversity – changing nature of Sefton's communities and resulting language barriers impacting on service delivery – interpreter costs and need to develop a more culturally diverse workforce
- Children's Act – welfare of child is paramount, but insufficient recognition of impact of DA on Mum
- Further training required around the higher risks involved with honour-based violence
- Insufficient mental health support for children / young people experiencing Da-related trauma – risks increase in future male perpetrators
- Education – schools and colleges, community groups, scale up
- Constraints in accessing facilities to undertake 1:1 casework

(Neil Frackelton, March 2022)