

3. DOMESTIC ABUSE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT TEAM - 2018 WEST  
LOTHIAN 16 DAYS OF ACTION CAMPAIGN

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Social Policy and a presentation by the Team Manager Domestic and Sexual Assault Team providing an overview of the West Lothian Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault Team (DASAT) activities and of the 2018 West Lothian 16 Days of Action campaign.

Domestic abuse remained a prevalent issue within Scotland. Police statistics on domestic abuse in 2017/18 published by the Scottish Government showed an increase in incidents from 2016/17. Within West Lothian there had been 2,205 reported incidents of domestic abuse in 2017/18. West Lothian performed well in comparison to the national averages, particularly in relation to early and effective interventions and multi-agency working.

West Lothian's DASAT was a unique, 18-staff public service hosted by West Lothian Council and served adults and children experiencing domestic abuse, sexual assault or other forms of violence through a framework of integrated services including: The Court Advocacy Service, Living in Safe Accommodation (LISA), DASAT Children's Service, the Almond Project and the West Lothian Children Experiencing Domestic Abuse Recovery (CEDAR) Project.

It was noted that DASAT expected a rise in referrals after the new Domestic Abuse Scotland Act 2018 came into force in February 2019 and that referrals tended to increase after public campaigns.

West Lothian had participated in the 16 Days of Action Against Gender-Based Violence campaign, whose aim was to engage with local partners to work together in a multi-agency approach to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls. Several multi-agency and joint training events had taken place during the campaign. Although the campaign was short term, it aimed to generate long-lasting impact and raise awareness of the impact of violence against women and children.

During discussion, it was noted that the LISA team aspired to eliminate homelessness for persons experiencing abuse. Although support offered was short-term, each case was assessed individually and services could be accessed repeatedly as required at the discretion of the affected individuals.

It was also explained that the Almond Project supported women at risk of offending and part of its aims was to limit reoffending through supporting relationship and trust building as well as understanding the offenders' backgrounds. Indeed, during support and post six months reoffending was rare.

Finally, it was noted that prevention work was being done with schools and families, which involved teaching respect and healthy relationships and ensuring understanding of acceptable behaviours.

The panel commended DASAT on its successful efforts.

It was recommended that the panel note the contents of the report.

#### Decision

- To note the contents of the report and presentation.
- To note the panel's thanks and appreciation for DASAT's endeavours and their positive outcomes.