



<b>Report To:</b>	<b>JOINT MEETING EXECUTIVE CABINET/OVERVIEW PANEL</b>
<b>Date:</b>	9 February 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Sandra Stewart, Director – Governance and Pensions Sarah Threlfall, Assistant Director – Policy, Performance and Communications
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>ASSURANCE REVIEW OF LGSCO FOCUS REPORT – IMPROVING SERVICES FOR DOMESTIC ABUSE VICTIMS</b>
<b>Report Summary:</b>	To receive for information, a service response on shared learning detailed within the LGSCO focus report on improving services for domestic abuse victims. Scrutiny Panels will routinely review LGSCO decisions, with shared learning reported to services in order to gain assurances of practice, delivery and outcomes for residents and service users.
<b>Recommendations:</b>	That Overview Panel is asked to note the content of the report and ongoing activity of the Scrutiny Panels to review LGSCO decisions to inform and improve local service delivery.
<b>Links to Corporate Plan:</b>	The work of Scrutiny is closely linked to the Council’s Corporate Plan Priorities. Scrutiny activity seeks to support effective decision making and improvement outcomes across Tameside.
<b>Policy Implications:</b>	Scrutiny work programmes comprise activity that seeks to check the effective implementation of the Strategic Commission’s policies and if appropriate make recommendations to the Executive with regards to development, performance monitoring, outcomes and value for money.
<b>Financial Implications: (Authorised by the Section 151 Officer)</b>	There are no direct financial implications arising from the content of this report. Any policy or service delivery changes considered as a consequence of Scrutiny activity and the recommendations from Scrutiny Panels will need to be assessed separately and the financial implications determined as part of this consideration.
<b>Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)</b>	The LGSCO issues reports to ensure learning is undertaken in local authorities from significant failings and there is an expectation that scrutiny members reassure themselves that there are measures and processes in place to ensure such incidents/./failings could so far as possible not take place in their own authority.
<b>Risk Management:</b>	Regular updates to Overview Panel provide assurance that Scrutiny is progressing with an effective work programme, supporting good decision making and service improvement.
<b>Access to Information:</b>	The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Paul Radcliffe, Policy and Strategy Lead by:
	 Telephone:0161 342 2199
	 e-mail: <a href="mailto:paul.radcliffe@tameside.gov.uk">paul.radcliffe@tameside.gov.uk</a>

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) is the final stage for complaints about councils and other organisations responsible for the provision of public services. The LGSCO also investigates complaints about adult social care providers including care homes and home care agencies. A complaint about an organisation or partner acting on behalf of a council or authority should also be signposted to the ombudsman.
- 1.2 LGSCO Focus Reports highlight subjects or systemic issues arising from case work. This routinely takes the form of shared learning opportunities and methods aimed to improve the approach and management of complaints. The reports make recommendations on good practice to help other authorities and care providers to review internal process and address areas where improvements can be made. The focus reports contribute to public policy debates and has more recently included information and tools for elected members to scrutinise local services and to inform work priorities.
- 1.2 Complaints raised by the public and service users can be an important source of information to help councillors identify issues that are affecting local people. Complaints can therefore play a key part in supporting the scrutiny of public services. In addition to current methods used to inform work priorities, Scrutiny will review decisions made by the LGSCO on a regular basis, to inform in-year work priorities. This will also contribute to the evidence gathered throughout the municipal year when developing the annual work programmes.

## **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The Integrated Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel made a formal request to the Executive Member for Health, Social Care and Population Health; and the Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services, to review a new LGSCO Focus Report and to collate a service response to a number of questions aimed to improve local accountability.
- 2.2 The report titled - *HELP! Learning to improve council services for domestic abuse victims*, was published in November 2021.
- 2.3 Councils have a key role in responding to domestic abuse and working with other agencies, such as the police and health services, to provide appropriate support. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 extends the range of duties place on authorities. While cases highlighted in the ombudsman report pre-date the introduction of the Act, they contain important and relevant lessons for councils and other public bodies in how to help domestic abuse victims.
- 2.4 The focus report includes case studies and the experiences to highlight the breadth of investigation and identifies common issues and themes associated with the following areas of provision for domestic abuse victims:
  - Wrongly sharing personal information with an abuser
  - Failing to work with other agencies to keep victims safe
  - Failing to safeguard children from risk of domestic abuse
  - Refusing to believe victims of domestic abuse and failing to understand what constitutes abuse
  - Failing to provide proper advice and support
  - Ignoring disclosures of domestic abuse
  - Failing to identify risks to victims
  - Delays in providing victims with services

2.5 Focus reports promote local accountability and include a comprehensive set of questions for Scrutiny to seek assurance at a local level. The service response (**APPENDIX 1**), responds directly to questions listed on pages 25 of the focus report (**APPENDIX 2**).

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 As set out on the front of the report