

For General Release

REPORT TO:	CABINET 13 July 2015
AGENDA ITEM:	8
SUBJECT:	Report on 8th meeting of Croydon Congress 11 June 2015 Changing attitudes and behaviours towards domestic abuse and sexual violence
LEAD OFFICER:	Nathan Elvery, Chief Executive
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Tony Newman Leader of the Council
WARDS:	All
CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT:	
The Council and its partners have agreed that reducing the incidence of domestic abuse and sexual violence in Croydon is a high priority.	
AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON & WHY ARE WE DOING THIS:	
The intention of the Council and the Local Strategic Partnership is to drive a change in attitudes and behaviours towards domestic abuse and sexual violence throughout the borough. To prevent domestic abuse and sexual violence wherever possible, support victims and hold perpetrators to account is an 'Ambitious for Croydon' outcome.	
FINANCIAL IMPACT	
There is no financial impact arising directly from this report.	
KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO.: This is not a key executive decision	

The Leader of the Council has delegated to the Cabinet the power to make the decisions set out in the recommendations below

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is recommended to

- 1.1 Endorse the proposals which have emerged from the domestic abuse and sexual violence theme of the 8th Meeting of Croydon Congress;
- 1.2 Note that these will go forward for consideration by the Local Strategic Partnership as part of a more detailed report.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report provides feedback on the 8th meeting of Croydon Congress, held on 11 June 2015. The theme was domestic abuse and sexual violence and the aim of the meeting was to change attitudes and behaviours of people and organisations in the borough and to better equip the community to take an active role with the issue. The reduction of domestic abuse and sexual violence is aligned with the Safer Croydon Community Safety Strategy.
- 2.2 This is the first report to Cabinet from Croydon Congress. The intention is that it will contribute to the raising of awareness among the wider public as well as the Council's strategic partners, an essential part of tackling domestic abuse and sexual violence. Proposals from Congress will be considered by the Local Strategic Partnership.

3. DETAIL

- 3.1 Croydon Congress is the over-arching stakeholder group for Croydon's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and has a key role in informing the future direction of the LSP's work, particularly on cross-cutting issues.
- 3.2 The 8th Croydon Congress was held on 11 June 2015, and attended by over 170 leaders and stakeholders from the business, public, voluntary, faith and community sectors. Delegates included representatives of Crystal Palace FC and the White Ribbon Campaign, which works to involve men in opposing violence against women. The theme of the meeting was changing attitudes and behaviours towards domestic abuse and sexual violence. The keynote speaker was Seema Malhotra MP, Shadow Minister for Preventing Violence against Women and Girls. The meeting was also addressed by Councillor Tony Newman as Chair of Croydon's Local Strategic Partnership and Leader of Croydon Council, by Vera Baird QC, Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria (via a recorded message), and by Fiona Bowman, who gave a personal account of her experience as a survivor of domestic abuse and sexual violence. It was chaired by Councillor Hamida Ali, Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance and Treasury.
- 3.3 To prevent domestic abuse and sexual violence wherever possible, support victims and hold perpetrators to account is an 'Ambitious for Croydon' outcome. Devoting a meeting of Croydon Congress to this theme is part of the LSP work to change attitudes and behaviours of people and organisations in the borough and to better equip the community to take an active role. In November 2014 Cabinet decided to adopt the White Ribbon Campaign. The Council is committed to gaining White Ribbon Status and to continuing our work with Crystal Palace FC as a way of raising awareness amongst men.
- 3.4 A full report on the discussions and proposals made at Croydon Congress will be considered by the Local Strategic Partnership including its themed Boards. However, emerging proposals are set out in this report.
- 3.5 **Emerging proposals**

- 3.6 Some of the key issues to emerge from discussions at Congress were:
- To work more with schools, including with primary schools, to ensure that young people and their families have a better understanding of what a 'healthy' relationship is and when and how to speak out if they are affected by domestic abuse or sexual violence; and to ensure teachers are trained to recognise the signs and respond accordingly;
 - To support perpetrators as well as victims, in order to prevent the cycle from repeating itself;
 - To encourage the community to play a more active role, including the promotion of 'safe spaces' in the community and training up community champions or advocates;
 - To encourage faith leaders and the faith community to play a more active role, particularly in raising awareness of the topic and reducing the stigma around a partner leaving an abusive relationship;
 - To encourage and assist employers in the borough to put procedures and policies in place to better support their workforce, including the promotion of anonymous helplines and workplace champions in order to give victims a wider range of options for disclosure;
 - To raise awareness about domestic abuse and sexual violence by taking a more targeted approach to highlight the experiences of different cultural and faith communities, especially in such a diverse borough where those voices are currently very difficult to hear;
 - To arrange for the film 'Leaving' to be shown to Police, schools, hospitals, businesses and organisations such as Crystal Palace FC, either by hosting events or by encouraging organisations to purchase the film themselves to show to their employees.

3.7 **Pledges**

- 3.8 During the course of the meeting, delegates were encouraged to make a specific pledge, either a personal pledge or one on behalf of the organisation they represent, to change attitudes and behaviours towards domestic abuse and sexual violence in Croydon. In total 89 pledges were made, covering issues including:
- HR policy changes, such as agreeing to implement a domestic abuse and sexual violence policy or introduce staff training;
 - Measures that the Council will introduce, including keeping the issue on the agenda and allocating resources to it;
 - Measures that statutory partners will introduce, such as displaying posters and helpline information;
 - Work to challenge attitudes;
 - Work to raise awareness;
 - Looking out for signs and symptoms;
 - Community responses, including sharing the message with local groups and putting on awareness-raising exhibitions;
 - Faith responses, such as discussing the issue and putting on events; and
 - Young people and school based pledges, such as schools leading discussions with staff and pupils on the issue.

Specific pledges range from a mosque committing to organise sessions on domestic abuse and sexual violence and a housing association offering to develop training courses for younger residents, to innovative activity involving working with local artists and victims of domestic abuse as well as to larger pledges, such as Croydon Health Services committing to develop a domestic abuse and sexual violence HR policy to cover their 4,000 employees.

3.9 Feedback

3.10 The levels of satisfaction were considerably higher than those recorded for previous Congress events. Of those delegates who completed their evaluation forms:

- 100% felt that the event overall was excellent/good (2014: 94%, 2013: 92%);
- 99% scored the speakers as excellent/good (2014: 91%, 2013: 95%);
- 99% rated the quality of the table discussions as excellent/good (2014: 88%);
- 99% rated the facilitation of table discussions as excellent/good (2014: 86%).

The most common words and phrases used by delegates to describe the event were ‘thought provoking’, ‘worthwhile’, ‘relevant’ and ‘time well spent’.

A young person who attended Congress said “It was very insightful and it made it clear to me that we all play a role in looking out for each other even if we have a fear of becoming involved in the situation. It was a privilege to be able to have a say about the situation as a young person.”

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 Croydon Congress is a consultative meeting, comprising leaders and stakeholders from the business, public, voluntary, faith and community sectors.

5 FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 There are no financial considerations arising directly from this report.

(Approved by: Lisa Taylor- Head of Finance and Deputy S151 Officer)

6. COMMENTS OF THE BOROUGH SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER

6.1 The Council Solicitor comments that there are no direct legal considerations arising from this report.

(Approved by: Gabriel Macgregor, Head of Corporate Law on behalf of the Council Solicitor and Monitoring Office)

7. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

- 7.1 There are no immediate HR considerations that arise from the recommendations of this report for HR staff.

Approved by: Michael Pichamuthu, HRBP on behalf of Heather Daley, Director of Human Resources)

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.1 Domestic abuse and sexual violence is mostly committed by men against women. It is both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality. The perpetrators are predominately men and the victims mainly women. The aim of the Congress meeting is to change attitudes and behaviours towards domestic abuse and sexual violence in Croydon and better equip the community to take an active role in reducing domestic violence in the borough, supporting victims and bringing perpetrators to account. Proposals from Congress will be considered by the Local Strategic Partnership.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 9.1 There is no environmental impact arising directly from this report.

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

- 10.1 Changing attitudes and behaviours towards domestic abuse and sexual violence in Croydon and equipping the community to take an active role will contribute to the reduction in domestic violence in the borough. This outcome is aligned with the Safer Croydon Community Safety Strategy.

11. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/PROPOSED DECISION

- 11.1 To raise awareness of domestic abuse and sexual violence among a wider audience – the public and the wider Local Strategic Partnership, highlighting the main issues and suggestions that have come out of Croydon Congress and reaffirming the strong commitment of Croydon Council and the Local Strategic Partnership to change attitudes and behaviours towards domestic abuse and sexual violence in the borough.

12. OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 12.1 Not applicable.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Congress Programme

Croydon Congress Domestic abuse and sexual violence background information booklet