

Report to: Adult Social Care and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 10 November 2016

By: Director of Adult Social Care and Health

Title: Refresh of East Sussex County Council 'White Ribbon' Accreditation

Purpose: To update the Committee on refresh of the East Sussex County Council 'White Ribbon' Accreditation

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1) endorse the White Ribbon Action Plan;
 - 2) support the proposal that elected members are invited to nominate themselves as 'White Ribbon' ambassadors to help raise awareness of the county council's commitment to increase social intolerance and reduced acceptance of violence and abuse.
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1 Background

- 1.1. East Sussex County Council sought and secured 'White Ribbon' status in 2014. This report sets out proposals to refresh the County Council's White Ribbon Action Plan and retain White Ribbon status in 2016, as part of the County Council's wider Domestic Abuse Strategy.

2. Supporting information

- 2.1. The East Sussex Safer Communities Partnership 'Domestic Abuse Strategy' was refreshed in 2013 and runs from 2014 – 2019.
- 2.2. The Strategy includes aims to '*increase social intolerance and reduced acceptance of violence and abuse*' so that people are able to have '*safe, equal and violence free relationships.*'
- 2.3. As part of these aims, the council sought and secured 'White Ribbon' status in 2014. This quality mark is available to those organisations that demonstrate a commitment to the aims of the White Ribbon Campaign (WRC), which is a national and international campaign. These include:
 - Mobilising men to campaign against violence against women & girls (VAWG)
 - Campaigning and raise awareness to address social attitudes and behaviour and alter social norms that lead to violent behaviour against women
 - Increasing awareness on the issue and campaign to ensure services are available to support victims and survivors of abuse
 - Mobilising the entire local community under the goal of ending violence against women and girls.
- 2.4. In East Sussex a number of the District and Boroughs also have White Ribbon status (including Eastbourne, Lewes and Hastings, with Wealden recently achieving White Ribbon Status for the first time) as do a number of other public bodies in Sussex including Sussex Police and Brighton & Hove City Council.

- 2.5. To secure White Ribbon status there is an accreditation process whereby the local authority sets out the actions being taken to achieve the aims outlined in 2.3 above with a focus on:
- Management/ Leadership
 - Domestic Abuse Strategy
 - Ambassadors and Advocates
 - Communication Strategy
 - Community Engagement
- 2.6. The cost of application is £500.00 and White Ribbon status lasts for two years.
- 2.7. Upon approval, the County Council will receive a WRC Award certificate, which entitles the County Council to use the WRC logo and receive full support from WRC staff. In addition, WRC Town Award Councils will have their logo and direct link to their homepage featured on the WRC website. Furthermore they will be invited to attend White Ribbon Town events including an Ambassador seminar for six plus recruited members and town conferences.
- 2.8. Appendix 1 is the draft action plan that has been developed by the Safer East Sussex Team, alongside other partners, to retain White Ribbon status. It sets out the actions the County Council will take.
- 2.9. A key part of the action plan is the nomination of at least four male ambassadors to take the actions of the campaign forward. As in previous years, it is proposed that elected members and senior officers are invited to (re)nominate themselves as White Ribbon Ambassadors to help raise awareness of the Council's commitment to increase social intolerance and reduced acceptance of violence and abuse. It is proposed that this invitation is open to male and female elected members and senior officers to reflect the importance of the whole community in challenging violence and abuse. However, in recognition of the aim of the White Ribbon Campaign to mobilize men specifically, there will be a target to secure the nomination of at least four male ambassadors. The Safer East Sussex Team will provide targeted training, with the WRC, to ensure that ambassadors have access to the information, resources, and support to help them in this role.
- 2.10. There is some debate and difference of opinions about whether it is helpful to raise awareness through a 'gender neutral' approach or a 'gender specific' approach – like the White Ribbon Campaign.
- 2.11. While, sadly, violence and abuse occurs in all parts of society, domestic violence and abuse, sexual abuse & harmful practices (like female genital mutilation, forced marriage, and so-called 'honour based' violence), disproportionality and cumulatively affect women and girls during their lifetime, and the perpetrators of these crime types are predominantly, but not exclusively, men.
- 2.12. Consequently a gender specific approach is important, because a gender neutral service does not provide an appropriate service to either women or men:
- For women and girls, a gender specific approach reflects evidence and service user consultation that routinely identifies the value of safe, separate women only services and spaces.
 - For men and boys, a gender specific approach also offers the best way to understand what these crime types mean, including why the majority of those who perpetrate violence and abuse are men. It also enables consideration of how the experience of being a male victim, survivor or witness can be different, the different needs and expectations of this group and how best to provide help and support.
- 2.13. So whilst it is important to raise awareness of ending violence against women and girls through our support of the white ribbon campaign, further consideration needs to be given to how to engage with men.

- 2.14. This is being taken forward in in two ways. Firstly, many actions taken as part of the response to these violence and abuse (including those actions set out in the White Ribbon action plan) will be applicable to men and boys because policies and procedures should provide protection and redress to all victim/survivors. Secondly, there is also a need for further work to identify those actions that can be taken, proportionally to need, to:
- challenge the behaviour of men who use violence and abuse;
 - support men where they experience violence and abuse;
 - support boys who witness or experience violence or abuse; and
 - work with men as allies in challenging violence & abuse and helping to change the attitudes and actions of their peers.
- 2.15. This work is being taken forward within the wider Domestic Violence and Abuse and Sexual Violence Actions Plans which are monitored through the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Management Oversight Group, with these crimes types also identified by the Safer Communities Partnership as priorities in 2016/17.
- 2.16. In 2016 a key focus of communications activity is the 16 Days of Action, which run from 25 November to 10 December. The Safer East Sussex Team will be undertaking a number of activities, including promoting information on sources of help and support locally, as are District and Boroughs and local specialist services. It is hoped that a central plank of this activity will be the opportunity to mark the successful retention of White Ribbon status.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 3.1. Retaining White Ribbon status is a visible demonstration of the County Council's ongoing commitment to increase social intolerance and reduced acceptance of violence and abuse so that people are able to have safe, equal and violence free relationships.
- 3.2. As a tool, the action plan developed as part of the application for White Ribbon Status enables the County Council to progress areas of work relating to this issue with a specific focus on men and boys as part of the wider approach to these forms of violence and abuse.
- 3.3. The Committee is asked to consider and comment on draft action plan and proposals to nominate senior officers and elected members.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None