It’s never ok
Royal borough launches domestic abuse campaign - p11-15

THE council has called on the Environment Agency to look into exactly why the River Quaggy burst its banks in Eltham just before Christmas, flooding people’s homes and making several families homeless.

Letters have already gone out to residents who have not been able to return to their homes, inviting them to apply for a cut in their council tax “in recognition of the upheaval and disruption to their lives”.

At a meeting of the full council last Wednesday (January 29) councillors expressed their “utmost sympathy” for the residents affected. They resolved to work with them to ensure there was adequate redress and assurances about future flood prevention from the Environment Agency, which is responsible for flood control.

It follows a public meeting with representatives of the Environment Agency on January 15, where there were still unresolved issues about what caused the floods.

Councillors strongly support residents, and believe the flooding was the result of a build-up of rubbish in the river defence system, installed in 2006, which caused the Quaggy’s flood defence system to fail.

There was 50mm of rain in 24 hours before midnight on December 23.
ACKLING violence and abuse in Greenwich has become a key priority for the council in its bid to make the royal borough a safer place to live.

And last week it officially launched the Royal Greenwich Against Domestic Violence and Abuse Campaign.

It includes a number of new initiatives which give extra support to victims, raise awareness and encourage the reporting of assaults and abuse.

It also includes the establishment of a specialist domestic violence police team dedicated to bringing offenders to justice.

The new Domestic Violence Intervention Team (DVIT) will include a detective inspector and a four-strong specially-trained team which can provide an immediate response to reported incidents and follow cases through the legal system.

It’s being funded with £600,000 from the council and builds on the success of VOCU - the council-funded squad set up to fight violent and organised crime.

Health officials in the Greenwich Clinical Commissioning Group are backing the campaign with another £250,000 which means emergency support services can be available for longer hours while health care professionals are trained to spot the signs to reduce repeat victimisation.

Key to the campaign is winning support from the public. Instead of turning a blind eye, people are being urged to come forward if they suspect a neighbour, relative or a friend is suffering at the hands of an abuser. A dedicated phone line (020 8317 8273) and a new website has been set up for people who are being abused and for people worried about someone else.

At the heart of the campaign is a major publicity drive that will see hard-hitting posters and leaflets displayed at community venues including GP surgeries, children's centres, schools and council buildings.

They were revealed at an official launch in General Gordon Square, Woolwich, led by Cllr Maureen O’Mara, the council’s cabinet member for community safety.
A helpline to safety

FUNDING from the campaign means that an advice line now has extra staff so that it can take more calls, while a new website offers 24-hour information. Both services give people vital links to the help they need.

The referral and advice line is open from 10am to 6pm, Monday to Friday. Outside of these hours there is an answerphone so callers can leave messages and referral details. The advice line and website are run by housing charity Housing for Women as part of its Greenwich Domestic Violence and Abuse (GDVA) Service, which also runs advice sessions at Plumstead Police Station. The GDVA service also manages five refuges across the borough along with providing support for women who want to stay in their homes. The support is provided through both one-to-one sessions and group workshops on topics including: domestic violence awareness, money and debt management, benefits advice, mental and physical health, parenting skills and support with employment and education. Women can also be referred to other agencies for specialist support.

“Both the advice line and the website can help victims as well as concerned family, friends and professionals seeking information or advice on what to do in cases of domestic abuse,” said Judith Banjoko, services manager with Housing for Women. She stressed: “If a woman calls for the first time, it’s important that she gets to talk to somebody as it might be the only time she feels brave enough or has access to the phone. Some women just want somebody to listen and believe what’s happening. Others want help to define the nature of abuse or to talk through their options and all calls are treated confidentially. “The additional funding means we have greater capacity to deal with more calls. Our dedicated advice workers often take repeat calls from some women building a trusting relationship which can often give the woman the strength to leave their abusive partner. The workers are skilled and experienced and hold a wealth of local knowledge that makes all the difference to the service we can offer.”

Call the GDVA Referral & Advice Line on 020 8317 8273 or visit www.gdva.org.uk or for more information visit www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/domesticabuse Call 999 in emergencies.

Seven local arrests made in London-wide police operation

SEVEN people were arrested when officers from the borough’s Domestic Violence Intervention Team (DVIT) took part in London-wide swoop on suspected domestic violence offenders.

The team, based at Plumstead Police Station, joined a 4,500 police task force on Thursday (January 23) for the Met’s day of action, called Operation Big Wing.

Officers, supported by specially-trained colleagues, were targeted to pursue and bring dangerous and prolific domestic abuse offenders to justice, so helping to end the suffering of victims.

Latest statistics show domestic abuse offences are up 8.9 per cent in the capital with 37,799 offences recorded between last April and January 12 this year. This compares with 34,298 offences recorded for the same period in the previous year.

Meanwhile, a range of domestic abuse awareness activities are taking place across all London 32 boroughs. They include stalls

Challenge abusive behaviour

THE Her Centre’s Domestic Violence Advocacy Service works with women at high risk providing emotional and practical support for victims of domestic and sexual violence, abuse and rape.

Advisors can help victims with a safety plan, support them through the court system, arrange emergency housing and deal permanent housing and benefits issues. It also runs tailor-made counselling sessions and therapeutic support for groups and one-to-one.

The centre jointly runs a weekly drop in at Brookhill Children’s centre on Fridays from 10am -12pm with Housing for Women, the Tryangle Project and Hudgells and Partner solicitors where victims can get advice including free legal advice. Her Centre advocates are also available for three days at week by appointment at Plumstead police station.

Her Centre director Stacy Smith said: “It’s really important to raise awareness particularly with the general public. Often women feel very isolated but if more and more people are recognising abusive behaviour, challenging it and supporting the victims, it’s got to improve the lives of people experiencing it.”

Call the Her Centre on 020 3260 7772 or visit www.hercentre.org

A helpline to safety

FUNDING from the campaign means that an advice line now has extra staff so that it can take more calls, while a new website offers 24-hour information. Both services give people vital links to the help they need.

The referral and advice line is open from 10am to 6pm, Monday to Friday. Outside of these hours there is an answerphone so callers can leave messages and referral details. The advice line and website are run by housing charity Housing for Women as part of its Greenwich Domestic Violence and Abuse (GDVA) Service, which also runs advice sessions at Plumstead Police Station. The GDVA service also manages five refuges across the borough along with providing support for women who want to stay in their homes. The support is provided through both one-to-one sessions and group workshops on topics including: domestic violence awareness, money and debt management, benefits advice, mental and physical health, parenting skills and support with employment and education. Women can also be referred to other agencies for specialist support.

“Both the advice line and the website can help victims as well as concerned family, friends and professionals seeking information or advice on what to do in cases of domestic abuse,” said Judith Banjoko, services manager with Housing for Women. She stressed: “If a woman calls for the first time, it’s important that she gets to talk to somebody as it might be the only time she feels brave enough or has access to the phone. Some women just want somebody to listen and believe what’s happening. Others want help to define the nature of abuse or to talk through their options and all calls are treated confidentially.”

The additional funding means we have greater capacity to deal with more calls. Our dedicated advice workers often take repeat calls from some women building a trusting relationship which can often give the woman the strength to leave their abusive partner. The workers are skilled and experienced and hold a wealth of local knowledge that makes all the difference to the service we can offer.”

Call the GDVA Referral & Advice Line on 020 8317 8273 or visit www.gdva.org.uk or for more information visit www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/domesticabuse Call 999 in emergencies.

Seven local arrests made in London-wide police operation

SEVEN people were arrested when officers from the borough’s Domestic Violence Intervention Team (DVIT) took part in London-wide swoop on suspected domestic violence offenders.

The team, based at Plumstead Police Station, joined a 4,500 police task force on Thursday (January 23) for the Met’s day of action, called Operation Big Wing.

Officers, supported by specially-trained colleagues, were targeted to pursue and bring dangerous and prolific domestic abuse offenders to justice, so helping to end the suffering of victims.

Latest statistics show domestic abuse offences are up 8.9 per cent in the capital with 37,799 offences recorded between last April and January 12 this year. This compares with 34,298 offences recorded for the same period in the previous year.

Meanwhile, a range of domestic abuse awareness activities are taking place across all London 32 boroughs. They include stalls

Challenge abusive behaviour

THE Her Centre’s Domestic Violence Advocacy Service works with women at high risk providing emotional and practical support for victims of domestic and sexual violence, abuse and rape.

Advisors can help victims with a safety plan, support them through the court system, arrange emergency housing and deal permanent housing and benefits issues. It also runs tailor-made counselling sessions and therapeutic support for groups and one-to-one.

The centre jointly runs a weekly drop in at Brookhill Children’s centre on Fridays from 10am -12pm with Housing for Women, the Tryangle Project and Hudgells and Partner solicitors where victims can get advice including free legal advice. Her Centre advocates are also available for three days at week by appointment at Plumstead police station.

Her Centre director Stacy Smith said: “It’s really important to raise awareness particularly with the general public. Often women feel very isolated but if more and more people are recognising abusive behaviour, challenging it and supporting the victims, it’s got to improve the lives of people experiencing it.”

Call the Her Centre on 020 3260 7772 or visit www.hercentre.org
Healing the hidden hurt

Challenge abusive behaviour

Project and Hudgells and Partner solicitors

where victims can get advice including free legal advice. Her Centre advocates are also available for three days a week by appointment at Plumstead police station.

Her Centre director Stacy Smith said: “It’s really important to raise awareness particularly with the general public. Often women feel very isolated but if more and more people are recognising abusive behaviour, challenging it and supporting the victims, it’s got to improve the lives of people experiencing it.”

Call the Her Centre on 020 3260 7772 or visit www.hercentre.org

MUM of three Anne-Marie has turned her life around after 17 years in an abusive marriage.

The 45-year-old from Woolwich now volunteers for the Her Centre working as a motivational speaker encouraging other women out of abusive situations.

She said: “I’d been in an abusive relationship for 17 years and changed my whole persona to become a subservient woman. I left many times but I always went back because of the children.”

As a young mum she was in and out of refuges and even moved away to Canterbury before coming back to London in 2004.

When the family’s troubles came to light at her daughter’s school, Anne-Marie was referred to a number of support agencies including the Her Centre in Woolwich, which provides emotional and practical support for female victims of domestic violence, abuse and rape.

With three years of counselling and practical support she says: “I thought domestic violence was only about a beating but there’s financial, emotional and psychological bullying. The Her Centre really helped me. Everybody is really friendly and no one judges you. I’ve got my confidence back and I’m seeing a future for myself.”

Since her divorce in 2007 family relationships have improved all round and she explained: “He has remarried and moved on and our relationship is better. I’m not scared of him and I’m more in control. I’ve forgiven him and moved on - I can’t hold bitterness. Our relationship was rubbish but he dotes on his kids and he sees them regularly.”

Anne-Marie, who has two girls aged 18 and 13 and a nine-year-old son, is happy to back the council’s domestic violence campaign by speaking about her life and said: “I’ll do anything to raise awareness. A lot of people are not aware of the help that’s available and it’s good that both men and women know they are not alone, there’s no shame and it’s not the victim’s fault.”

She added: “Domestic violence usually happens behind closed doors and people may hear it but they don’t know what to do. Having the helpline and the website means there’s always somewhere they can go.”

### Sound advice from a survivor

MUM of three Anne-Marie has turned her life around after 17 years in an abusive marriage.

The 45-year-old from Woolwich now volunteers for the Her Centre working as a motivational speaker encouraging other women out of abusive situations.

She said: “I’d been in an abusive relationship for 17 years and changed my whole persona to become a subservient woman. I left many times but I always went back because of the children.”

As a young mum she was in and out of refuges and even moved away to Canterbury before coming back to London in 2004.

When the family’s troubles came to light at her daughter’s school, Anne-Marie was referred to a number of support agencies including the Her Centre in Woolwich, which provides emotional and practical support for female victims of domestic violence, abuse and rape.

With three years of counselling and practical support she says: “I thought domestic violence was only about a beating but there’s financial, emotional and psychological bullying. The Her Centre really helped me. Everybody is really friendly and no one judges you. I’ve got my confidence back and I’m seeing a future for myself.”

Since her divorce in 2007 family relationships have improved all round and she explained: “He has remarried and moved on and our relationship is better. I’m not scared of him and I’m more in control. I’ve forgiven him and moved on - I can’t hold bitterness. Our relationship was rubbish but he dotes on his kids and he sees them regularly.”

Anne-Marie, who has two girls aged 18 and 13 and a nine-year-old son, is happy to back the council’s domestic violence campaign by speaking about her life and said: “I’ll do anything to raise awareness. A lot of people are not aware of the help that’s available and it’s good that both men and women know they are not alone, there’s no shame and it’s not the victim’s fault.”

She added: “Domestic violence usually happens behind closed doors and people may hear it but they don’t know what to do. Having the helpline and the website means there’s always somewhere they can go.”

### Sound advice from a survivor

MUM of three Anne-Marie has turned her life around after 17 years in an abusive marriage.

The 45-year-old from Woolwich now volunteers for the Her Centre working as a motivational speaker encouraging other women out of abusive situations.

She said: “I’d been in an abusive relationship for 17 years and changed my whole persona to become a subservient woman. I left many times but I always went back because of the children.”

As a young mum she was in and out of refuges and even moved away to Canterbury before coming back to London in 2004.

When the family’s troubles came to light at her daughter’s school, Anne-Marie was referred to a number of support agencies including the Her Centre in Woolwich, which provides emotional and practical support for female victims of domestic violence, abuse and rape.

With three years of counselling and practical support she says: “I thought domestic violence was only about a beating but there’s financial, emotional and psychological bullying. The Her Centre really helped me. Everybody is really friendly and no one judges you. I’ve got my confidence back and I’m seeing a future for myself.”

Since her divorce in 2007 family relationships have improved all round and she explained: “He has remarried and moved on and our relationship is better. I’m not scared of him and I’m more in control. I’ve forgiven him and moved on - I can’t hold bitterness. Our relationship was rubbish but he dotes on his kids and he sees them regularly.”

Anne-Marie, who has two girls aged 18 and 13 and a nine-year-old son, is happy to back the council’s domestic violence campaign by speaking about her life and said: “I’ll do anything to raise awareness. A lot of people are not aware of the help that’s available and it’s good that both men and women know they are not alone, there’s no shame and it’s not the victim’s fault.”

She added: “Domestic violence usually happens behind closed doors and people may hear it but they don’t know what to do. Having the helpline and the website means there’s always somewhere they can go.”

### Sound advice from a survivor

MUM of three Anne-Marie has turned her life around after 17 years in an abusive marriage.

The 45-year-old from Woolwich now volunteers for the Her Centre working as a motivational speaker encouraging other women out of abusive situations.

She said: “I’d been in an abusive relationship for 17 years and changed my whole persona to become a subservient woman. I left many times but I always went back because of the children.”

As a young mum she was in and out of refuges and even moved away to Canterbury before coming back to London in 2004.

When the family’s troubles came to light at her daughter’s school, Anne-Marie was referred to a number of support agencies including the Her Centre in Woolwich, which provides emotional and practical support for female victims of domestic violence, abuse and rape.

With three years of counselling and practical support she says: “I thought domestic violence was only about a beating but there’s financial, emotional and psychological bullying. The Her Centre really helped me. Everybody is really friendly and no one judges you. I’ve got my confidence back and I’m seeing a future for myself.”

Since her divorce in 2007 family relationships have improved all round and she explained: “He has remarried and moved on and our relationship is better. I’m not scared of him and I’m more in control. I’ve forgiven him and moved on - I can’t hold bitterness. Our relationship was rubbish but he dotes on his kids and he sees them regularly.”

Anne-Marie, who has two girls aged 18 and 13 and a nine-year-old son, is happy to back the council’s domestic violence campaign by speaking about her life and said: “I’ll do anything to raise awareness. A lot of people are not aware of the help that’s available and it’s good that both men and women know they are not alone, there’s no shame and it’s not the victim’s fault.”

She added: “Domestic violence usually happens behind closed doors and people may hear it but they don’t know what to do. Having the helpline and the website means there’s always somewhere they can go.”