

**Meeting of the Children and Young People Sub-Group of the Regional Steering  
Group on Domestic Violence  
Wednesday 22 April 2009  
2pm, Andras House, Great Victoria Street, Belfast**

**Present:**

Liz Shaw	Health and Social Care Board, Chair
Pip Jaffa	Parents' Advice Centre
Sharon Breslin	NSPCC
Paul Cassidy	DHSSPS

**Apologies:**

Joan McGovern, Barnardo's  
Debbie Mehaffy, Women's Aid Federation

**1. Introductions and Apologies noted**

**2. Minute of the meeting held on the 10 December 2008**

2.1 Minutes agreed.

**3. Matters arising**

3.1 Letter to Chair of RSG

The issues raised had been brought to the attention of the Department's Office of Social Services who had written to the Directors of Social Services. No feedback has been received yet.

**Action: Paul to follow-up with OSS for next meeting.**

On this issue, it was noted that there appear to be a number of assessment tools in use (DART, DASA, R2R, Barnardo's and MARAC) and it was considered that some comparisons and monitoring of outcomes would be useful. Ideally one agreed assessment tool should be used. It was pointed out that some models are aimed at assessing levels of risk to adults. However, it was generally agreed that the many processes in use involve a lot of effort and there should be a more streamlined way of working. A policy directive is needed.

**Action: Risk assessment models to be included on agenda for RSG meeting on 9 June.**

3.2 CAFCASS Guidance

A draft of the guidance has been produced. However, nationally this guidance exists in an environment of safeguarding which will not be introduced in NI until late 2009/early 2010. The draft will be circulated to members for information/comment with a view to progressing the document in advance of the introduction of safeguarding.

**Action: Draft guidance to be circulated to members.**

### 3.3 PSNI referrals to Social Services

The high number of referrals from PSNI to Social Services in bulk remains a concern in some areas. A pilot is underway in C District (Belfast) looking at increasing the risk assessment undertaken by PSNI officers and in turning helping to inform the response by Social Services. An evaluation is due at the end of April/May 2009.

**Action: Liz will speak to the Reform Implementation Team and report back to the Group re the evaluation.**

### 3.4 Child Contact Centres

3 new centres are planned in the Southern Area but there will not be any supervised contact. It was suggested that the requirement for supervised access should be a requirement in future tender documents. There is a clear detrimental effect on children and the support of the court is needed. The right to contact needs to be balanced with the needs of the child.

**Action: Liz to talk to Muriel Orr and report back.**

## 4. 2009/10 Action Plan

4.1 The action plan for 2009/10 had been circulated for final comments following the workshop on 20 March. Paul agreed to extract all those issues relating to children and young people into a separate document for members.

4.2 There is scope for some confusion as the new Support and Prevention Sub-Groups have also developed actions relating to children and young people. DVU will have to ensure that the Sub-Group is kept informed of development on these issues.

**Action: Paul to extract relevant actions from action plan for Group members.**

## 5. Membership

5.1 The Western Local Domestic Violence Partnership and the Women's Aid Federation had asked to nominate members for the Group. It was pointed out that Women's Aid is represented (Debbie Mehaffy or Sarah Mason) and that Sharon Breslin is a member of the Western Partnership. While there was no strong objection it was agreed that current membership should be pointed out to the organisations and that they should be asked to justify further membership.

**Action: Paul to advise WLDVP and WAFNI that both groups are already represented and to ask why additional members are being nominated.**

## 6. "24 hour" Snapshot

6.1 Judith Bell was unable to attend today but is happy to attend a future meeting to discuss this issue. Paul advised that DHSSPS Community Information Branch is planning its programme of work for the year ahead and that DVU has highlighted this survey as being an important piece of work. The Group will be kept advised of developments.

**Action: Judith Bell to be invited to a future meeting.**

## **7. Update from RSG**

7.1 The main issues arising from RSG on 10 March were:

- Work is to be done for the next meeting on the range of DV risk assessment tools being used.
- IMG is due to meet on 6 May 2009;
- PIs are being developed for the DV Strategy;
- Work is ongoing on the roll-out of MARAC. CAADA presented at the Action Planning Workshop on 20 March. Guidance notes have been produced and issued to key organisations. The guidance note will be copied to members for information.

**Action: MARAC Guidance notes to be copied to members.**

## **8. AOB**

8.1 Paul advised that John Devaney, QUB, was undertaking a child well-being study which is seeking to establish the prevalence amongst children of a range of issues that affect their well-being, including abuse and neglect. He is keen to include some questions that assess children's exposure to domestic violence, and therefore would allow a more informed judgment to be made about the number of children exposed to domestic violence in N Ireland, and would like to discuss the study with the sub-group. Members agreed that this would be a worthwhile piece of work and would be happy to discuss.

**Action: John and colleagues to be invited to the next meeting of the Group.**

8.2 The NI Policing Board has published a Thematic Inquiry into DV. Copies will be circulated to members for information.

**Action: Paul to circulate**

8.3 A representative from DE should be invited to the next meeting to update the Group on curricular changes.

**Action: Paul to invite**

8.3 RIT is producing an information sharing protocol. When it is finalized copies should be circulated to members for information.

**Action: Liz to keep members updated.**

8.4 Meeting with NI Youth Forum.

The NI Youth Forum would be happy to meet with the Group to discuss any matters of mutual interest. Paul will find out more about what NI Youth Forum does before a meeting is arranged.

**Action: Paul to provide information on NI Youth Forum.**

**Next Meeting: 10 June 2009**

**Venue: Andras House, Great Victoria Street, Belfast**