

**FIRST MEETING OF THE CHILDREN'S ISSUES SUB GROUP OF THE
REGIONAL STEERING GROUP ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

WEDNESDAY 9 MARCH 2005

ROOM 144, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

- In attendance:**
- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| Ken Wilson (Chair) | Department of Health and Social Services |
| John Devaney | Eastern Health and Social Services Board |
| Maddie Bell | Barnardos |
| Anne Marks | Police Service of Northern Ireland |
| Pip Jaffa | Parents Advice Centre |
| Dawn Shaw | NCH - National Children's Home |
| David Mann | Department of Education (NI) |
| Katherine Minnis | Central Services Agency |
- Apologies:**
- | | |
|-------------|---|
| Anne Graham | Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation |
|-------------|---|
- Secretariat:**
- | | |
|----------------|--|
| Marie Austin | - Department of Health and Social Services |
| Elaine Farrell | - Department of Health and Social Services |

1. Introductions and Apologies

- 1.1 Mr Wilson welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Children's Issues Sub-Group and provided members with a brief background to developments over the past 18 months, which have led to the establishment of the Regional Steering Group and its Sub-Groups.
- 1.2 Each member gave a brief outline of his or her background and interest in domestic violence.

2. Membership and Terms of Reference

- 2.1 Members considered paper CISG 1/2005 which outlined the existing Terms of Reference and Roles and Responsibilities of the Sub-Group. Members agreed that the four main areas to focus on in terms of prevention, protection and support were:
- Commissioning research/surveys;
 - Promoting good inter-agency working;
 - Promoting good practice guidelines; and
 - Addressing gaps in services.
- 2.2 Ms Jaffa highlighted that the collection and dissemination of statistics would not require huge resources although it would require agreement of the relevant agencies. Mr Wilson advised members that the

Information Sub-Group was taking the lead on this matter. However, members agreed that a meeting of the two Sub-Groups should be considered to take the matter forward.

Action: Mr Wilson to discuss with the Chair of the Information Sub-Group.

Ms Shaw informed the Sub-Group that the four Health and Social Services Boards were currently looking at indicators, which the Sub-Group could feed into. The Regional Outcome meeting due to be held in the near future would provide more information on the matter.

Action: Ms Shaw to report to the group at the next meeting.

Mr Devaney agreed to ask the Children's Service Planners to ensure that domestic violence and the effects on children is kept on the agenda.

Action: Mr Devaney to report progress to the group at the next meeting.

Members agreed that the Terms of Reference and Roles and Responsibilities would be kept under review.

2.3 Ms Jaffa expressed some concern that children are being seen in isolation rather than in the family context. Members agreed that children's issues should be considered in the family context where appropriate. Mr Wilson suggested the inclusion of an overall strategy statement in relation to children and families may be useful.

2.4 Members considered the title of the Sub-Group and agreed that it should be changed to 'Children and Young People's Sub-Group'.

2.5 Members considered membership of the Sub-Group. Ms Jaffa highlighted that the views of children and young people were not represented. Members agreed that the views of children and young people were essential to inform the Sub-Group's work.

Action: Mr Wilson to write to Ms Pauline Leeson (CiNI) to try to identify ways to access the views of children and young people affected by domestic violence.

Action: Mr Wilson to liaise with a representative from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and consider how best mental health issues arising from exposure to domestic violence can be included in any future developments of CAMHS services.

Action: All members to consider ways to access the views of children and young people affected by domestic violence.

3. PRESENTATION ON DRAFT DOMESTIC STRATEGY

3.1 Ms Austin gave a brief presentation on 'Tackling Violence at Home'. Some of the areas covered included:

- Draft domestic violence strategy – where we are now;

- Implementation structures;
- Children's issues raised during consultation;
- Support services for children; and
- Possible issues for consideration by Children's Sub-Group.

3.2 Members noted that apart from the existing resources available to support domestic violence work, the Department of Health and Social Services had secured an additional £200k for each of the next three years. Most of this money would be used to fund the new free-phone domestic violence helpline, local fora, and training. However, there would be a small development fund, for specific projects. Mr Wilson informed members that, with the agreement of the Regional Steering Group, there may be access to some of the Development Fund to fund specific projects.

Action: All members to give this consideration and bring ideas to the next meeting.

4. FUTURE ISSUES FOR SUB GROUP

4.1 Members discussed future issues for consideration by the Sub-Group:

- Recovery Work – Ms Bell highlighted the need for recovery work to help children cope with the 'loss' of a parent following separation;
- Risk Assessment – Members agreed that there was a need for a speedy and robust risk assessment process in relation to parental (perpetrator) contact. Ms Shaw informed members that, while there are six low vigilance contact centres in Northern Ireland, there are no high vigilance centres. Ms Bell advised members that there was work being done at present on the less severe cases of domestic violence via family group conferencing;
- Addressing domestic violence through the school curriculum – Mr Mann outlined the changes to the curriculum, which would allow domestic violence to be addressed in schools. Members highlighted the need for back up services to pick up on disclosures and stressed that the curriculum needs to be influenced by a multi-agency approach - perhaps an inter-agency package. It was suggested that programmes should be offered to parents to allow them to have some understanding of the issues.

4.2 Members agreed that the Sub-Group should identify what preventative programmes/materials are being used in schools and consider how the Sub-Group could extend one or more of the programmes to a wider area, or, pilot a programme on a collaborative basis. It was agreed that the Local Fora should be asked to help identify preventative programmes in their respective areas.

Action: Members to forward details of programmes/materials to Ms Austin by 28 April 2005.

Action: Mr Mann to identify schools that would be receptive to domestic violence programmes.

Action: Ms Austin to map programmes/materials when information available.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 Members considered a copy of English guidance on *Providing support for children who have witnessed domestic violence/abuse*. Members agreed to consider the document further with a view to producing something similar for Northern Ireland.

5.2 Members agreed to consider the paper, 'Definition of Harm' and forward comments to Ms Austin.

6. DATE AND VENUE FOR NEXT MEETING

6.1 Members agreed that the next meeting of the Sub-Group has been scheduled for Monday 9 May 2005 at 2.00 p.m. in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.