

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE INFORMATION SUB GROUP OF THE REGIONAL STEERING GROUP ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Monday 23 May 2005
Room 135, Parliament Buildings, Stormont.

Present

Lynn Cree (Queen's University Belfast)
Robin Dempsey (Police Service of Northern Ireland)
David Mann (Department of Education)
Maxine McCutcheon (Men's Advisory Project)
Liz McCrystal (Skills For Justice)
Eugene Mooney (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency)
Anne Graham (Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation)
Myra Andrews (Men to Men)
Edel Robinson (Northern Ireland Office)
Glynnis Henderson (Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment)
Joan McGovern (Barnardos)
Kevin Shiels (Domestic Violence Unit)

Apologies:

Catherine Reilly (Ulster Community and Hospital Trust) – Chair
John Devanney (Eastern Health and Social Services Board)
Hilary Wells (Central Services Agency)
Anne Marks (Police Service of Northern Ireland)
Ken Wilson (Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety)
Pip Jaffa (Parent Advice Centre)
Carolyn Mason (Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety)
Grace Henry (Help the Aged/Age Concern)
James Knox (Coalition on Sexual Orientation/Rainbow Project)
Dawn Shaw (NCH)

Secretariat:

Marie Austin (Domestic Violence Unit)

1. Introduction

Mr Shiels welcomed everyone to meeting, and in particular, members of the Children and Young People's Sub Group who had been invited to attend because the issue straddled the work of both sub-groups.

2. Presentation by Ms Glynnis Henderson, Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

- 2.1 Ms Glynnis Henderson CCEA briefed members on the revised Northern Ireland Primary and Secondary Curriculum. She circulated a copy of a draft framework for the Personal Development strand and Home Economics strand of the Learning for Life and Work Area of the revised Curriculum, and information on the Personal, Social and Health Education Module for Key Stage 4 students.

Ms Henderson briefed members on a number of issues including:

- the background and principal themes of the revised curriculum;
- curriculum proposals for Key Stages 1-2 and Key Stages 3-4;
- the role of the Statutory Curriculum; and
- possible opportunities to address domestic violence through the new curriculum.

- 2.2 A discussion followed on the presentation and the documents circulated. Members expressed concern that the draft framework guidance mentioned domestic violence as a suggested issue for consideration on only one occasion. Members acknowledged that opportunities existed to address domestic violence through the Personal Development strand and Home Economics strand of the Curriculum, but it was felt that domestic violence should be mentioned specifically as an issue for consideration in other relevant areas. Ms Henderson agreed to consider specific mention of domestic violence where appropriate. Members stressed the importance of training school staff in dealing with domestic violence and also highlighted the need for a rolling programme of training for teachers. Ms McCrystal also asked that education be put on the agenda for consideration at the next Children and Young People's Sub Group meeting.

Action: Ms Henderson to consider the opportunities for inclusion of references to domestic violence as an issue for consideration in other relevant areas of the draft framework and report her findings via Department of Education to the Information Sub Group.

Action: DV Unit to place education on the agenda for the next Children and Young People's Sub Group meeting.

- 2.3 A copy of 'Silence is Not Always Golden' produced by the National Union Of Teachers had been circulated to members prior to the meeting. The document gives guidance on how the curriculum can be used to raise the importance of domestic violence as an issue for schools and demonstrates to young people that violence should not be tolerated. Mr Shiels informed members that the Home Office had also produced guidance which had been passed to Mr Mann. Members felt that consideration should be given by the Education Authorities to the production of specific guidelines for Northern Ireland.

Action: Mr Mann to consult with relevant bodies, including the General Teaching Council, in relation to the production of specific guidance for Northern Ireland and report his findings to the Information Sub-Group at its meeting on 7 June 2005.

Note: The Welsh Assembly has also recently produced guidance for head teachers and others working with children and young people: *Good Practice on Domestic Abuse/Safeguarding Children and Young People in Wales*. A copy has been passed to Mr Mann.

- 2.4 Members raised the possibility that some teachers may be experiencing or even perpetrating domestic violence. Mr Shiels informed members that Schools and E&L Boards, as employers, would be encouraged by the Regional Steering Group to adopt a policy on Domestic Violence and the Workplace. If schools adopt a DV policy then teachers as employees would be covered by the policy.

Mr Shiels thanked Ms Henderson for a very useful and informative presentation.

3. Presentation by Ms Anne Graham, Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation

- 3.1 Ms Anne Graham briefed members on the prevention work carried out by Women's Aid in schools. She provided members with information on projects/information packs developed by NIWAF/local Women's Aid groups for children and young people affected by domestic violence and those who work with them:

- The Young Person's Development Project. The purpose of the project is to develop local protection and prevention strategies for young people affected by domestic violence;
- Preventative Education in Community and Schools (PECS) – This includes training for staff and external agencies and the development of prevention materials and standardised programmes such as Heading for Healthy Relationships – No Fear (ages 12-18) and Helping Hands (ages 5-12);
- Standardised Prevention Training – 4 Day Model. This allows teachers to deliver training and as a result makes programmes more sustainable. Feedback from teachers who have undertaken this training has been very favourable and there has been lots of interest from others. However, teachers have reported that getting released to undertake training is difficult;
- Good practice guidelines for delivering domestic violence prevention programmes.

Women's Aid have delivered either Helping Hands or No Fear to 63 schools across Northern Ireland. However, Ms Graham expressed some concern that there are still teachers who believe that domestic violence affects only those children in working class areas. Members agreed that it was vital to have guidance produced for teachers to raise awareness of the issue and banish such myths.

Mr Shiels thanked Ms Graham for a very useful and informative presentation.

3.2 **General Conclusion**

It was agreed that the way forward on the issue of getting domestic violence covered in schools was for the education authorities to alert schools to the need to cover the issue via whatever opportunities exist within the new curriculum. The local DV partnerships could then encourage *all* schools within their areas to address the issue and training could be provided.

4. **Any Other Business**

- 4.1 Mr Dempsey informed members that the Police Service of Northern Ireland had published its Statistical Report – 1st April 2004 – 31st March 2005 and agreed to send a copy to Ms Austin for circulation to all interested parties.

Action: Mr Dempsey to send Statistical Report to Ms Austin

Action: Ms Austin to issue Statistical Report to members of the Regional Steering Group and its Sub Groups and chairs of the Local Fora.

5. **Date And Venue For Next Meeting**

- 5.1 The next meeting of the Information Sub-Group has been scheduled for Tuesday 7 June 2005 at 9.30 a.m. in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.