

**Minutes of the NI Domestic Violence & Law Sub Group Meeting held in the Conference Room, 19<sup>th</sup> Floor Windsor House Belfast on Thursday, 14th April 2005 at 2.30pm.**

**Present:**

<u>Mr Ken Nixon RM</u>	<u>Chair</u>
Mr Paul Doran	PBNI
Ms Clare Irvine	OLR
Insp. Robin Dempsey	PSNI
Mrs Jacqui Durkin	NICtS
Ms Sharon Harley	NIO
Ms Marie Brown	Foyle Women's Aid
Ms Edell Fitzpatrick	DPP
Mr Peter O'Brien	Law Society
Ms Alice Beggs	Secretary

**ITEM 1: APOLOGIES**

**1.1** Apologies were received from Jacqui McGarvey (SHSSB), Eileen McAllister (PBNI) and Fiona Greene (Victim Support).

**ITEM 2: MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 13 JANUARY 2005**

**2.1** The minutes of the meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> January 05 were agreed.

**ITEM 3: MATTERS ARISING**

**3:1** Marie Brown is to contact NIWAF regarding their representation on this sub-group.

**ITEM 4: REGIONAL STEERING GROUP ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**4.1** The Chair referred to the RSG meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2005 and the group agreed that some progress had been made. Draft 2 of the 'Tackling Violence at Home' Strategy had been circulated to members for comment.

**Action:** To be included on the agenda for the next meeting.

**ITEM 5: DRAFT LAW REFORM (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) (NI) ORDER 2004**

**5.1** Clare Irvine distributed the Draft Statutory Instruments and reported that the Draft Order was to go to the House of Lords after 5<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

**Action:** To be included on the agenda for the next meeting.

#### **ITEM 6: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, CRIME AND VICTIMS ACT 2004**

**6.1** Edell Fitzpatrick advised that both she and Robin Dempsey are members of the implementation group for Act. The staged introduction of the Act is underway, familial homicide provisions legislation having been commenced on 21<sup>st</sup> March 05.

**Action:** To be included on the agenda for the next meeting.

#### **ITEM 7: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDE REVIEWS**

**7.1** Sharon Harley mentioned that she is to attend the first meeting of the Home Office Working Group, which is developing guidance on the operation of homicide reviews. She will update the sub-group at the next meeting.

**Action:** To be included on the agenda for the next meeting.

#### **ITEM 8: SERVICE OF EX PARTE/NON-CONSENT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ORDERS**

**8.1** Robin Dempsey informed the sub-group that PSNI had an initial meeting with NIO to review the legislation regarding service of these orders. Instructions have been issued to DCU's regarding serving documents and time constraints.

**Action:** To be included on the agenda for the next meeting.

**8.2** Marie Brown reported that Foyle Women's Aid meet on a monthly basis with Londonderry Court Office and PSNI to resolve any problems associated with service of orders.

#### **ITEM 9: NON-VIOLENT RELATIONSHIPS PROJECT (NVRP)**

**9.1** Paul Doran spoke to the Project that has now ended. It has been very successful and an independent evaluation will be launched on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2005. The Chair will forward a letter on behalf of the sub-group to the RSG stating the benefits gained from the Project and requesting funding to continue the work.

**9.2** Sharon Harley advised that Criminal Justice Policy Branch (NIO) has been tasked with putting forward recommendations for a one-stop shop for victims. In its initial stages of consideration it is envisaged that such a one-stop shop might include the victims of both domestic and sexual violence. She explained however that one of the action points under the DV strategy is to examine the feasibility of piloting a one-stop shop for the victims of DV, the lead for which rests with Community Safety Unit. She also advised that this work will continue in tandem with the work being carried out by CJPB. The sub-group emphasised that domestic violence was a particular field and any pilot should consider the special requirements of victims of domestic violence.

**9.3** Discussion followed on the need for the RSG to prioritise a plan of work, establish lead departments and funding. It was suggested that the information gathered from the numerous pilots (MODV, Cardiff, Croydon, Glasgow etc.) could be used as a basis for moving forward however, the sub-group agreed that there was a need to focus on what schemes would be feasible and which would make a difference in NI. Sharon Harley agreed to draft a letter to the Criminal Justice Branch requesting a presentation to this sub-group that would

evaluate and compare the various pilot schemes mentioned. The Chair will forward the letter on behalf of the sub-group.

**Action:** Issues to be brought back to RSG and to be included on the agenda for the next meeting.

#### **ITEM 10: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE MEDIA CAMPAIGN**

**10.1** Sharon Harley advised the group that an evaluation of the media campaign is underway. The sub-group noted that the Helpline had experienced a 34% increase in calls within NI.

**10.2** The Chair advised that filming of N&W Belfast Forum's video on domestic violence was to begin at the end of April at Laganside Courts. It will be launched in September 2005 and distributed to Women's Aid etc. for training purposes.

**10.3** Copies of 'The Writ' were distributed. Peter O'Brien thanked contributors for their articles highlighting domestic violence. Claire Irvine commented that OLR were grateful that the Law Society had agreed to publish such articles.

#### **ITEM 11: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEAFLET**

**11.1** Peter O'Brien and Marie Brown are currently reviewing the leaflet. Tara Caul of Children in NI has been approached by NIO regarding the production of a further leaflet in child friendly language.

#### **ITEM 12: EVALUATION OF FAMILY MEDIATION PILOT**

**12.1** Claire Irvine updated the sub-group. Relate NI is to publish the evaluation of the Family Mediation Pilot that was carried at Belfast and Ballymena Courts. There was a low uptake (48 cases in total), which will influence the results. Referred cases were not meant to involve domestic violence, but participants in the pilot cited domestic violence as an issue. This has highlighted a need for protocols for referrals, as mediation may not be appropriate in cases where domestic violence is an issue. As the pilot has not produced the hoped for results it will not be rolling out in its present format.

**12.2** Jacqui Durkin agreed to provide a summary of the COAC Sub-Committee Report on Court Welfare Officers (subject to Ministerial approval) for the next meeting of this sub-group.

**Action:** To be included on the agenda for the next meeting.

#### **ITEM 13: CHILDREN ORDER ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**13.1** The sub group agreed to reissue an invite to Mr Justice Gillen, Chair of the Children Order Advisory Committee (COAC) to attend the next meeting to discuss how the COAC sub-committee on Domestic Violence interlinks with this sub-group.

**Action:** Chair to re-issue invite to Mr Justice Gillen

#### **ITEM 14: ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**14.1** The Chair is to issue an invite to Dr Monica McWilliams to become a member of this sub-group.

**Action:** Chair to issue invitation to Dr McWilliams

**14.2** Peter O'Brien advised that representatives of Child Contact Centres (CCC's) have formed a province wide group to look at standardising practice and protocols. He is to attend the inaugural meeting and will report to the sub-group at the next meeting. Claire Irvine stated that OLR were to consider a possible review of private law proceedings under the Children (NI) Order 1995 and suggested that this might also include taking forward the issue of CCC's.

**Action:** To be included on the agenda for the next meeting.

**14.3** Robin Dempsey reported that the training of Domestic Violence Investigators is due to finish in May. The policy document that had been circulated to the District Commanders and which has been in operation from September 2004 is to be reviewed in July. PSNI are also considering the development of a guidance booklet on the techniques of collecting and recording evidence.

**14.4** Edell Fitzpatrick advised that a draft domestic violence policy for CPS had been developed and she would update the sub-group at the next meeting.

**Action:** To be included on the agenda for the next meeting.

#### **ITEM 15: DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**15.1** The next meeting of the sub group is arranged for **Thursday, 16th June 2005 at the Conference Room, Business Support Group, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Bedford House, Bedford Street, Belfast starting at 2.30pm.** (Mr Justice Gillen is invited to attend at approximately 3.45 pm). The usual light refreshments will be available.

27 April 2005  
Secretary