

**Minutes of the NI Domestic Violence & Law Sub Group Meeting held in
the Conference Room, 3rd Floor Bedford House, Belfast on
Thursday, 16 June 2005 at 2.30pm.**

Present:

<u>Mr Ken Nixon RM</u>	<u>Chair</u>
Mr Paul Doran	PBNI
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), Ms Clare Irvine (OLR), Eileen McAllister (PBNI), Prof. Monica McWilliams and Fiona Greene (Victim Support).

ITEM 2: MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 14 APRIL 2005

2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 14th April 05 were amended at paragraph 9.2.

ITEM 3: MATTERS ARISING

3:1 On behalf of the sub group, the Chair welcomed Anne Graham as the new NIWAF representative.

ITEM 4: REGIONAL STEERING GROUP ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

4.1 The Chair referred to a letter received from Ward Erwin of the Criminal Justice Policy Division (NIO) on the research project into a 'one stop shop' for the criminal justice system which will be discussed at the next RSG meeting. The project will also look at evaluations of pilots in other jurisdictions. It was suggested that the sub group draft a proposal requesting research into the various models in operation however, Sharon Harley advised that such research would be taken forward by the Action Plan of the DV Strategy.

4.2 Edell Fitzpatrick distributed the PPS draft policy for prosecuting domestic violence cases and requested that members respond by the 30th September 05.

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

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

5.1 The sub group expressed interest in the commencement date of the above legislation as judiciary will need to be advised in a timely fashion.

Action: Secretary to note. To be included on the agenda for the next meeting.

ITEM 6: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, CRIME AND VICTIMS ACT 2004; and DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDE REVIEWS

6.1 Sharon Harley advised that draft guidelines for homicide reviews were to be issued. There would be a three month consultation period. She will update the sub group at the next meeting.

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

ITEM 7: SERVICE OF EX PARTE AND NON-CONSENT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ORDERS and DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INVESTIGATORS (DVO's) POLICY & TRAINING

7.1 Robin Dempsey informed the sub group that DVO's training is complete and that the policy will be reviewed in August 05.

Marie Brown noted that in her area, DVO's are finding it difficult to find time to complete follow up investigation and support. Robin Dempsey stated that PSNI would need to train enough officers to make the operation successful. Anne Graham added that DVO's need to have information on/access to the support agencies. Robin Dempsey reported that PSNI have developed a pocket card containing information and contact details for distribution to victims. He also advised that PSNI are to meet with the Southern HSS Board to look at risk assessment and information gathering. Any protocols agreed will be circulated to all Boards.

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

ITEM 8: PSNI STATISTICAL REPORT 2004/05

8.1 The Chair referred to the above report and to the Evaluation of NI Crime Survey (03/04) and noted the increase in domestic violence incidents.

ITEM 9: NON-VIOLENT RELATIONSHIPS PROJECT (NVRP)

9.1 Paul Doran advised that the independent evaluation of the project was launched on 10th June 05. The sub group agreed that the RSG would need to make a decision as to whether this successful project is to be taken forward. John Devaney (EHSSB) has written to the various Trusts regarding the issue of funding and is awaiting responses.

9.2 Marie Brown spoke to the MODV perpetrator programs involving Foyle Women's Aid, social services and PBNI and suggested that these needed to be evaluated to prove their success and secure future funding.

9.3 The sub group fully supports the work carried out in both programmes.

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

ITEM 10: EVALUATION OF FAMILY MEDIATION PILOT

10.1 Jacqui Durkin updated the sub group in the absence of Claire Irvine. Relate NI has published the evaluation of the pilot that was carried out at Belfast and Ballymena Courts. Referred cases were not meant to involve domestic violence, but participants in the pilot cited domestic violence as an issue and in some instances mediation could not continue.

NICtS perceived a lack of awareness amongst court users and stepped in to heighten the profile in the piloted courts. Jacqui Durkin stated the pilot did not produce the hoped for results and therefore it will not be rolling out in its present format however, it did highlight the need for mediation services. Peter O'Brien observed that there needed to be a greater lead-in period to advertise, canvass and brand the service availability for potential users.

10.2 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 11: CHILD CONTACT CENTRES (CCC's)

11.1 Peter O'Brien advised that the Network of Child Contact Centres had its inaugural meeting and agreed a mission statement in accordance with NACCC protocols. His Honour Judge McFarland has written to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Shaun Woodward inviting him to address the COAC sub-committee on Child Contact Centres. Issues to be considered are funding, establishing a lead department, the role of volunteers at centres and how information may be gathered on the success of any contact arrangement. The sub group welcomes this development.

11.2 Peter O'Brien advised that an article is to appear in 'The Writ' on CCC'S availability and their facilities.

11.3 Laura McPolin (OLR) and Fergal Bradley (DHSSPS) are looking at supervised contact in private law cases. The Chair is to issue an invite to Ms McPolin to attend the next meeting of this sub group.

Action: Issues to be brought back to RSG and to be included on the agenda for the next meeting. Chair to issue invite to Ms McPolin.

ITEM 12: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

12.1 The sub group agreed to issue an invite to Mr Mervyn Bates RM to become a member of this sub group (subject to his consent and the approval of RSG).

Action: Chair to issue invite to Mr M Bates RM

ITEM 13: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

13.1 The next meeting of the sub group is arranged for **Thursday, 15th September 2005 at the Conference Room, 19th Floor Windsor House, Bedford Street, Belfast starting at 2.30pm.** The usual light refreshments will be available.

08 July 2005
Secretary