

MINUTES OF THE NI DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND LAW SUBGROUP MEETING AT MILLENNIUM HOUSE ON TUESDAY 31 JANUARY 2006

Attendees

Sharon Harley, CSU (Chair)
Peter O'Brien, Law Society
Marie Brown, Foyle Women's Aid
Mervyn Bates RM, NICtS
Anne Graham, WAF
Clare Irvine, OLR
Pauline Mooney, PSNI
Claire Gavaghy, NICtS (*Substituting for Mandy Kilpatrick*)
Eileen McAllister, PBNI
Jo O'Reilly, Secretary

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Sharon Harley welcomed everyone to the first of this year's Domestic Violence and Law Subgroup meeting and in particular to Pauline Mooney (PSNI) who has replaced Robin Dempsey and Claire Gavaghy representing NICtS.
- 1.2 Apologies received from Fiona Greene (Victim Support) and Edel Fitzpatrick (PPSNI). The Chair advised the subgroup that the representative for SHSSB is still to be nominated

Action 1: Secretary to approach SHSSB and ask for representation.

2 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2005

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 24 November 2005 are agreed without amendment.

3 REGIONAL STEERING GROUP ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE MINUTES

- 3.1 See points 4 – 6 below.
- 3.2 Pauline Mooney advised that all PSNI Domestic Violence Officers (DVO) have now completed the investigator training course. Pauline over the next few months is evaluating the role of DVOs. Pauline also advised the group of a pilot MARAC in the Ballymena/Antrim/Larne region.

Action 2: Secretary to pass details of the pilot onto Deloitte who are researching the DV One Stop Shop.

4 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, CRIME AND VICTIMS ACT 2004; AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDE REVIEWS

- 4.1 Sharon Harley reported that she is still awaiting developments from the Home Office on the homicide reviews with regard to guidelines and consultation. It is probable that NI will have to produce its own guidelines and consult separately from the Home office.

Note: To be included on the next agenda.

5 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND WORKPLACE POLICIES

- 5.1 Sharon Harley advised that the workplace guidelines are currently with the Union for agreement. Sharon asked for update from members on progress within each organisation on having policy / guidelines in place. Eileen McAllister advised that PBNI's policy was geared towards offenders rather than staff and it may be that they needed a second policy in place. She agreed to explore this further.
- 5.2 Sharon Harley advised that DHSSPS had engaged with Institute of Personnel Development and 'Opportunity Now' on workplace policies and it was also hoped to hold a Corporate Alliance event at Hillsborough Castle around May 2006 at which NI employers and organisations could 'sign-up' to the guideline. It is envisaged that the Civil Service and other major employers should have a policy in place by this stage.
- 5.3 Marie Brown advised that Altnagelvin Hospital is due to launch a DV workplace policy on 11 March 2006 and Foyle Trust is to follow shortly after this.

Action 3: Eileen McAllister to receive draft workplace guidelines and take forward within PBNI.

6 NON-VIOLENT RELATIONSHIPS PROJECT (NVRP)

- 6.1 Sharon Harley advised that work in rolling out the NVRP was now being taken forward by John Devaney and Cheryl Lamont in consultation with Anne Graham. Anne Graham advised that the working group's recommendation is likely to reflect that a stand alone NVRP would be only sustainable in Belfast and remaining money could be used to enhance existing MODV programmes. All MODV programmes outside the Eastern Board accept voluntary referrals onto their programmes.
- 6.2 Mervyn Bates believed more needed to be done to raise the awareness and that more information is made available to the courts on the NVRP and MODV Programmes. Peter O'Brien stated that it was worth thinking of information provision to solicitors; however all agreed that any awareness raising needed to be gradual as numbers on the programme were limited.
- 6.3 Marie Brown raised concern that perpetrators used the programmes to get reduced sentences but once sentences were passed places were not taken up or used. This in turn impacted on programme numbers. Mervyn Bates stated sentencing needed to evaluate the progress and attendance over the 26 weeks and 6mth deferral would be appropriate. Also Mervyn raised a question on the vulnerability of witnesses and the referral process. Anne Graham agreed to liaise with John Devaney and Cheryl Lamont to seek clarification on the referral process and procedures in place and to report back

Action 4: The Chair to raise 6.2 and 6.3 with the RSG.

Action 5: Anne Graham to liaise with John Devaney and Cheryl Lamont to seek clarification on the referral process and revert.

Note: To be included on the next agenda.

7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

7.1 *Domestic Violence One Stop Shop (OSS)* – Sharon advised that Deloitte had been appointed to research the feasibility of the OSS and that they were due to complete their report at the end of March 2006. Sharon advised that they may be in contact with members.

Note: To be included on the next agenda.

7.2 *Law leaflet* – Sharon Harley provided copies of the A4 version of the law leaflet and advised that this would be launched along with the credit card version at the RTS Conference on 6 February. She stated that copies would be circulated widely and going to GP, Dental and Optician Practices, solicitors, DV Partnerships, courts, PSNI and libraries. If anyone requires copies, please contact the secretary.

8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

8.1 The date of the next meeting is **2.30pm on Tuesday 25 April 2006 in Millennium House.**

Jo O'Reilly
Secretary