

Minutes of the second meeting of the Regional Steering Group on Domestic Violence

Thursday 10th February 2005 – Room 135, Parliament Buildings, Stormont

Present:

Andrew Hamilton (DHSSPS) – Chair	Robin Dempsey (PSNI)
Leslie Frew (DHSSPS)	Clare Irvine (OLR)
Grace Henry (Help the Aged/Age Concern)	Paul Doran (PBNI)
Ken Nixon (Resident Magistrate)	Sharon Harley (NIO) <i>DEPUTISING</i>
Jacqui Durkin (NICtS)	Pauline Leeson (CiNI)
Brendan Devlin (DSD)	Catherine Reilly (UCHT)
Hilary Sidwell (NIWAF)	Liz Shaw (SHSSB)
Maxine McCutcheon (MAP)	Eamon McTernan (WHSSB)
Kevin Shiels (DHSSPS)	Peter O'Brien (Law Society)
Marie Austin (DHSSPS)	Hilary Harbinson (OFMDFM)
Ken Wilson (SSI)	
Michael Graham (NIHE)	

Apologies:

Dominic Burke (Vulnerable Adults Forum)
Conal Devitt (NIO)
David Mann (DE)
John Devaney (EHSSB)
Margaret Black (NHSSB)
Edell Fitzpatrick (DPP)

Observer:

Anne Graham (NIWAF)

1. Introduction

1.1 Mr Hamilton welcomed everyone to the second meeting of the Regional Steering Group. Hilary Sidwell informed the Group that she was taking up a new post with WHSSB and would be leaving the Group. Mr Hamilton, on behalf of the Steering Group, thanked Ms Sidwell for her contribution and wished her well in her new position. Anne Graham will represent NIWAF on the Group until further notice.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2004

2.1 Members agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2004 without amendment.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 Workplace Guidance

Mr Shiels informed members that he had recently had a very constructive meeting with the Central Personnel Group of Department of Finance and Personnel. There was agreement in principle that a Northern Ireland Civil Service-wide domestic violence policy should be developed based on the RSG's Workplace Guidance on Domestic Violence and Abuse. Agreement would have to be reached with Heads of Personnel in the various Departments and consultation with Trade Union side would also be necessary. However, there was optimism that a Civil Service-wide policy could be put in place by about September 2005. Members noted that the Northern Ireland Court Service had already published similar guidance for its staff and that the NIO is also considering how to take this forward. Members agreed that guidance for other employers in the wider public and private, voluntary and community sectors should be developed and that consideration should be given to distributing the guidance through representational organisations e.g. Chamber of Commerce, Unions, NICVA etc.

Action: Members to email suggestions on key organisations to Mr Shiels or Ms Austin.

3.2 RSG and Sub-Group Membership

RSG

Mr Peter O'Brien (Law Society) and Mr Dominic Burke (Vulnerable Adults Forum) had been nominated to represent their respective organisations on the Regional Steering Group.

DV and Law Sub Group

Mr Nixon informed members that Ms Monica McWilliams had accepted nomination to the Domestic Violence and Law Sub group.

Children's Issues

Mr Wilson reported that a meeting of the Children's Issues Sub Group had been scheduled for March 2005 and that membership of the Group had been extended. Details of membership will be circulated to the Group in due course. Mr Andrew Hamilton informed members that he had received a letter from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children seeking representation on the Regional Steering Group. Members considered the request and agreed that a representative from the NSPCC should be asked to sit on the Children's Issues Sub Group.

Action: DV Unit to issue nomination letter to NSPCC

Information Sub Group

Ms Reilly advised the Group that it would be necessary to reconstitute the Information Sub Group and asked members to consider if their organisations needed to be represented on the Sub Group.

Action: Members to forward any suggestions to Ms Austin

3.3 Mr Shiels informed the Group that he had written to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (Northern Ireland Committee) to alert them to the possibility of further consultation and possible attendance at sub-group meetings in relation to issues relevant to Trades Unions.

3.4 *Children Order Advisory Committee*

Mr Frew informed Ms Durkin that he would forward details of a nominee from the Department of Health to the Children Order Advisory Committee Sub-group on Child Contact Centres in the near future.

Note: It has since been confirmed that Patricia McVeigh, Family Policy Unit is the DHSSPS rep.

4. **Domestic Violence Unit and Additional Resources**

4.1 **Domestic Violence Unit**

Mr Hamilton informed the group that it was still the intention to write to relevant Government Departments to seek agreement in principle to fund a Domestic Violence Unit (in the long term). In the short to medium term, however, while the Assembly remained in suspension, Mr Shiels and Ms Austin would continue on loan to DHSSPS and would constitute the Domestic Violence Unit. Mr Hamilton gave a commitment that, in the event of any future political progress and these staff being recalled to the Assembly, they would be replaced to ensure the work continued.

4.2 **Additional Resources**

Mr Hamilton explained that the DHSSPS had approved an additional £200k for each of the next 3 years for domestic violence. Some of this would have to be earmarked for the new Free-phone Helpline Service; there were also proposals to have a DV Development Fund to allow the RSG to fund, for example, some pilot projects or possibly research; and some consideration needed to be given to funding of training, possibly via the 11 local DV fora.

4.3 It was agreed that the NIO and DHSSPS should meet in the first instance to consider funding available over the next 3 years and the Departmental priorities for it. Mr Shiels would then arrange a meeting with the 3 RSG Sub-Group chairs and Local Fora chairs to consider proposals for use of additional funds. Ms Harley informed the Group that, as the NIO already provides funding to Community Safety Partnerships, it would not be in a position to further fund Local Fora.

Action: DV Unit and NIO to meet and meeting with local for a chairs to be organised.

Mr Hamilton said it would be useful if the RSG could have a paper for its next meeting outlining the money already being spent on Domestic Violence across all Government Departments and Agencies, including funding of voluntary bodies; and proposals for use of the additional money now available. It was acknowledged, however, that it would be difficult, if not impossible in some cases, to determine what was being spent on domestic violence e.g. in health and social services, court

costs etc. Ms Leeson asked that projects funded by the Children's Fund should be considered for inclusion in the paper as funding is due to end and there are no contingency plans in place.

Action: DV Unit will contact all Departments and Agencies to seek input on costs for Resources paper.

5. Options for Structures at Area and Local Level

- 5.1 Members agreed that the existing 11 Domestic Violence Fora and the relevant Community Safety Partnerships should form new partnerships. This would ensure that all the bodies with an interest in tackling domestic violence would be working together on an inter-agency basis. It was agreed that there was no need for another tier at HSS Board level and that the meeting involving the DV Unit, NIO, Sub Group chairs and Local Fora should also consider how the local fora and CSPs are working/should work together in effective partnership; and the lines of communication between local fora and RSG.

6. Media Campaign

- 6.1 Mr Shiels updated members on the media campaign:
- the final TV advertisements and posters etc had been received and copies had been issued to members;
 - the TV ad to be shown in ROI would include a reference to Women's Aid in the end frame (above telephone number). Women's Aid in the South had agreed initially to no logos. However, the organisation had threatened to withdraw support from the campaign if there was no reference to the organisation's role in relation to the Helpline, and the Department of Justice in Dublin had reluctantly agreed; this would not affect the TV Ads in Northern Ireland;
 - the TV ad would run for 3 weeks, from 21/2/05 to 13/3/05. The outdoor campaign would run from 28/2/05 to 27/3/05;
 - radio advertising would not be used. However a tape of the 10 sec Ad would be distributed to radio stations for possible use;
 - enquiries have been made in relation to the distribution of posters to GP surgeries, dentists etc. Members agreed to consider if they could distribute posters to relevant offices within their organisations and to contact Ms Austin regarding numbers required;
 - full details of the media campaign had been issued to 11 Local Fora; PSNI Domestic Violence Officers and Trade Unions;
 - the launch would be held on 21 February 2005 at 11.00 a.m. in the Holiday Inn, 22 Ormeau Avenue, Belfast;
 - all RSG members and their guests were invited to the launch of the campaign.

7. Funding for Future Media Campaigns

Mr Hamilton expressed his gratitude to the Departments who had contributed to the current media campaign which cost £120k – NIO, Northern Ireland Court Service, DHSSPS, DSD and DFP (OLR). The current TV Ad could be used again in the future. However, it would be a matter for the RSG and its 3 sub-groups to decide on different themes for the future. Ms McCutcheon (MAP) and Mr Knox (CoSO) had already put down a marker at the December meeting for some specific awareness raising around male victims. Mr Shiels asked **all** Departments represented on the RSG to make a bid for media campaign resources for the next financial year 2005/06.

Action: Departmental representatives to make a bid for media campaign resources for 2005/06

8. Work of Sub Groups

8.1 *Domestic Violence and the Law Sub-Group*

Mr Nixon informed the group that the Domestic Violence and Law Sub Group had met in January 2005. A number of issues were discussed including: consultation on the Draft Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 2004; North and West Belfast Forum, Domestic Violence Video; Domestic Violence Homicide Reviews; and Service of Ex Parte/Non Consent Domestic Violence Orders. Mr Nixon agreed to circulate a copy of the minutes to the Group. The next meeting of the Sub-Group had been arranged for April 2005.

8.2 *Information Sub-Group*

Ms Reilly reported that the Information Sub-Group would be reformed to include a wider range of membership. Members agreed to notify Ms Austin of nominations to the Sub-Group and of any suggestions to ensure more effective engagement with the Department of Education and its Agencies.

Action: Members to email suggestions to Ms Austin

8.3 *Children's Issues Sub-Group*

Mr Wilson informed the Group that a meeting of the Sub-Group would take place in March 2005.

9. Draft Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy

9.1 Mr Shiels thanked all those members and organisations that had already submitted responses to Draft No.1. He asked that any outstanding responses be forwarded to either himself or Ms Austin by 18 February 2005 at the latest. It was agreed that responses would be issued to individual members if requested. Members agreed that the Group should establish an editorial sub-group to produce a second draft of the Strategy for consideration. The sub-group should comprise the three sub-group chairs, a representative from NIWAF, Ms Harley,

Mr Shiels and Ms Austin. It was envisaged that the second draft would be produced by end March 2005.

10. Guidelines for MPs/MLAs

10.1 A number of minor amendments to the guide were suggested and agreed.

Action: Members to forward any further comments on the draft Guidelines for MPs/MLAs to Ms Austin.

11. Statistical Evaluation of the 'Men Overcoming Domestic Violence' Programme

11.1 Mr Doran (PBNI) spoke to the paper: Statistical Evaluation of the 'Men Overcoming Domestic Violence Programme'. Since 1997, PBNI had delivered a "Men Overcoming Domestic Violence" programme for male perpetrators of domestic violence. The programme aimed to increase participants' understanding of their actions and awareness of the consequences. The evaluation carried out by the University of Ulster assessed the effectiveness of the programme by exploring the relative change in participant's beliefs, attitudes and associated characteristics between the 'pre-treatment' and 'post-treatment' stages.

11.2 Mr Doran informed members that funding for the Non-Violent Relationship Programme was due to end in Spring 2005. However, the Steering Group will continue to meet with a view to further development of the Programme.

12. Raising The Standards Conference

12.1 Mr Shiels explained that the next Raising The Standards conference is to be held in Belfast on 6 and 7 February 2006. The Raising The Standards Committee, which meets on a quarterly basis to share good practice on domestic violence, comprises representatives from England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Guernsey. The conference would aim to bring together Statutory and non-Governmental Organisations to share ideas and practices across the various jurisdictions. The theme of the February 2006 conference will be "Working Together to Prevent Abuse" with focus on *Prevention, Education and Inter-Agency Co-operation*; each of the 6 countries involved would do a presentation (3 each day) and where possible this should be a team effort involving Departmental/Agency and NGO staff.

13. Get-to-know-you/Induction Session

13.1 Members agreed that a get-to-know-you/induction session should be organised and should take place after the next meeting of the Regional Steering Group. It was agreed that each member of the group should

forward a short profile on themselves and their work to Ms Austin in advance of the meeting.

Action: DV Unit to organise and consult members on contributions

Members also considered the format of the session and the use of a facilitator but no final decisions were taken.

Action: Members to forward suggestions for facilitator/format of session to Ms Austin or Mr Shiels

Members discussed the possibility of a performance of the play 'Don't Say A Word' by Ms Patricia Byrne, as part of the afternoon session. A second performance at a later date for a wider audience of senior managers in relevant Departments and Agencies was also proposed.

Action Note: Ms Austin has contacted Patricia Byrne, Sole Purpose Productions, but she is not available for 11 May.

14. Any Other Business

14.1 Mr Hamilton informed the group that he had received a letter from Ms Susan Reid, Chief Executive, Victim Support Northern Ireland. Ms Reid had requested membership for her organisation on the Regional Steering Group. Members agreed that VSNI should be asked to nominate a representative to sit on the Group. Members also agreed that Ms Reid should be invited to attend the launch of the Domestic Violence Media Campaign.

Action: DV Unit to issue invite to media campaign launch to Victim Support

14.2 Members agreed that minutes of RSG meetings should continue to be circulated to local fora chairs.

15. Date and venue for next meeting

15.1 A further meeting of the Regional Steering Group has been arranged for:

Date:

Time:

Venue:

11 May 2005

10:00am

The Mount

Business and Conference Centre, Belfast