

**Minutes of the fourth meeting of the Regional Steering Group on
Domestic Violence**

**Wednesday 29 June 2005 at 10.00 a.m.
Room 144 Parliament Buildings, Stormont**

Present:

Andrew Hamilton (DHSSPS) – Chair	Robin Dempsey (PSNI)
Clare Irvine (OLR)	Margaret Donaghy (MCRC)
Conal Devitt (NIO)	Edell Fitzpatrick (DPP)
Liz Shaw (SHSSB)	Margaret Black (NHSSB)
Anne Graham (NIWAF)	Kevin Shiels (DV Unit)
James Knox (CoSO/Rainbow)	Marie Austin (DV Unit)
Sharon Harley (NIO)	
Paul Doran (PBNI)	
Jacqui Durkin (NICtS)	
Michael Graham (NIHE)	

Apologies:

Leslie Frew (DHSSPS)	Hilary Harbinson (OFMDFM)
Catherine Reilly (UCHT)	Susan Reid (Victim Support)
John Devaney (EHSSB)	Ken Nixon (Resident Magistrate)
David Mann (DE)	Pauline Leeson (CiNI)
Maxine McCutcheon (MAP)	Deirdre Webb (EHSSB)
Brendan Devlin (DSD)	Ken Wilson (SSI, DHSSPS)
Eamon McTernan (WHSSB)	
Peter O'Brien (Law Society)	
Elaine Farrell (DV Unit)	

1. Introduction

1.1 Mr Hamilton welcomed everyone to the fourth meeting of the Regional Steering Group.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 May 2005

2.1 Members agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 11 May 2005 without amendment.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 *Health Representative on Regional Steering Group*

Mr Hamilton advised Members that Ms Deirdre Webb, Assistant Director of Nursing (EHSSB) would be the new Health representative on the Regional Steering Group. Unfortunately Ms Webb was unable to make this meeting.

3.2 *Funding*

Mr Hamilton outlined the agreed allocation of funding from the additional £200k DHSSPS money, but pointed out that formal approval of departmental budgets at DFP level was required before the allocations could be made:

- 1) Local Domestic Violence Partnerships - money would be allocated to each Board area (on a capitation basis) and the local dv partnerships could then agree with their Board whether their shares would be better used individually or collectively:
 - Eastern Board £16k in-year and £28k in subsequent years
 - Northern Board £10k in-year and £17k in subsequent years
 - Southern Board £7k in-year and £13k in subsequent years
 - Western Board £7k in-year and £12k in subsequent yearsThe Local Fora would not be required to bid to the RSG for funds. However, the Regional Steering Group would approve the actual application of funds.
- 2) Non-Violent Relationship Project (NVRP) - £40k in-year and recurrent, provided that additional funding becomes available from other Departments/sources to make it feasible.
- 3) Barnardo's Risk Assessment Model - £20k in-year and £40k for 3 years thereafter. Members agreed that an evaluation of the model should take place at the end of the 3-year period.
- 4) Domestic Violence Development Fund - £50k in-year only. Members noted that the DV Unit is devising some criteria to assess applications and will issue same to RSG members for consideration and discussion at next RSG meeting in September.

3.3 *Performance of the play 'Don't Say a Word'*

A performance of the play 'Don't Say a Word' was held on 2 June 2005 in the Crescent Arts Centre and was well received. There was a good attendance including representation from judges and magistrates. Mr Shiels informed members that a performance of the play is under consideration for the Raising the Standards Conference which is to take place in February 2006.

3.4 On behalf of the Steering Group, Mr Hamilton congratulated Edell Fitzpatrick on her promotion to Deputy Director of the Public

Prosecution Service and expressed hope that she would remain as a member of the Regional Steering Group.

4. Request for representation for Lesbian Line and position regarding Disability representative

4.1 The group considered a request for representation on the Regional Steering Group from Lesbian Line. Members agreed that a representative from Lesbian Line should be asked to sit on the Information Sub-Group.

Action: DV Unit to issue nomination letter to Lesbian Line

4.2 Mr Shiels informed members that Equality colleagues had advised that the Regional Steering Group should make further efforts to obtain Disability representation. Members agreed that Disability Action should be contacted again in relation to representation on the Regional Steering Group.

Action: DV Unit to issue letter to Disability Action seeking nomination from Disability Action or member organisation.

5. Update on work of Sub-Groups

5.1 *Domestic Violence and Law Sub-Group*

In Ken Nixon's absence, Ms Harley, Ms Irvine and other sub-group colleagues updated Members on recent developments:

- Draft Law Reform and Miscellaneous Provisions – The Order has received Privy Council approval and is now on the Statute books. The Office of Law Reform is liaising with the Court Service to consider issues that may arise following implementation in September 2005.
- Common Assault will become an arrestable offence from 1 July 2005. Ms Harley agreed to contact NIO Criminal Law Branch to ensure courts and the Law Society are notified of the change. Ms Harley confirmed that NIO Minister would issue a press release in relation to the matter.
- Domestic Homicide Reviews – Home Office will launch 12-week consultation in September with a view to commencement in December. All or some of the Home Office Guidelines may be applicable to Northern Ireland. However, further consideration needs to be given to the matter when the Guidelines have been finalised. Ms Harley informed members that she intends to establish a working group to look at the Home Office Guidelines and would be contacting relevant members of the Regional Steering Group in relation to membership.
- Ms Harley advised members that the Community Safety Unit would soon be examining the feasibility of a 'One Stop Shop' for

victims of domestic violence in Northern Ireland. A Steering Group will be established to consider the matter further.

- Ms Durkin highlighted the need to consider Information Sharing models carefully to ensure that whatever model is adopted is an improvement on existing practices in Northern Ireland.
- Ms Fitzpatrick provided Members with a copy of a Public Prosecution Service Consultation Document: *Policy for Prosecuting cases of Domestic Violence*. Members agreed that a copy of the document should be circulated to Sub-Group Members and that consideration should be given to submitting a unified response.

Action: DV unit to circulate document to RSG Sub-Group Members for consideration.

Action: DV unit to circulate document to Local Fora Chairs for information.

5.2 *Information Sub-Group*

In Catherine Reilly's absence Mr Shiels updated Members on recent Information Sub-Group meetings:

- The Information Sub-Group received presentations from Ms Glynnis Henderson, Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and Ms Anne Graham NIWAF in relation to addressing domestic violence in schools. Ms Henderson agreed to consider the opportunities for inclusion of references to domestic violence as an issue for consideration in relevant areas of the draft curriculum framework. David Mann had agreed to discuss with his education colleagues the production of guidance for teachers (to alert schools to the need to cover the issue via whatever opportunities exist within the new curriculum).
- Contact has been made with all Directors of Nursing Services in Northern Ireland to establish the current position in each Trust regarding the introduction of Routine Enquiry for Pregnant Women. Responses received so far have been favourable. It is envisaged that this will become DHSSPS policy.
- Mr Damien Donnelly (AV Browne) and Mr Philip Maguire (DHSSPS Information Office) had attended a meeting of the Sub-Group to discuss a proposed multi-media strategy for addressing domestic violence including further airings of the Doll's House Ad. Mr Donnelly had recommended two further bursts of activity using a combination of television, radio and tactical outdoor advertising. A specific meeting of the Information Sub-Group has been organised for 26 July 2005 to consider the matter further.

5.2.1 Members agreed that responsibility for progressing the next phase of the media campaign should be delegated to the Information Sub-Group. There would be no requirement to obtain Regional Steering Group approval. However, the Departments, particularly those

providing the funds for the campaign needed to be kept informed of developments and Mr Shiels and Ms Harley agreed to update all the relevant Departments as progress was made.

5.3 *Children and Young People's Sub Group*

Mr Shiels informed Members that a meeting of the Children and Young People's Sub Group had not taken place since the last RSG meeting in May 2005.

Action: Mr Shiels to contact Ken Wilson to arrange next meeting.

5.4 Members agreed that a Deputy Chair should be appointed to each Sub-Group.

Action: Appointment of deputies to be placed on each Sub-Group meeting agenda.

5.5 Ms Irvine informed Members that Office of Law Reform are taking forward research into the private law aspects of the Children Order and in particular contact and residence. Ms Irvine agreed to consider the inclusion of this project in the Strategy Action Plan.

Action: Ms Irvine to consider inclusion of project in Action Plan and inform DV Unit of decision.

5.6 Mr Hamilton asked Members to consider the way forward in relation to Child Contact Centres. Mr Hamilton suggested that a multi-departmental bid may be appropriate to access funding to extend child contact services in a number of locations on a pilot basis. Mr Shiels agreed to reconsider the wording of the relevant action point in the Strategy Action Plan.

Action: Mr Shiels to revisit relevant action point in Strategy Action Plan.

6. **Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy and Initial Action Plan**

6.1 Mr Shiels informed members that he had presented the draft strategy to the DHSSPS Departmental Board and that it had been approved with some suggested minor changes. Ms Harley advised that the NIO Director of Criminal Justice had also given approval. Members considered the document and there was unanimous endorsement. Members were asked to send any final drafting amendments to the DV Unit by Friday 8 July 2005. After this date the document will be sent to relevant Ministers seeking their approval to publish. Subject to Ministerial approval, the document will be printed and proofed over the summer period and a copy will be issued to Members for final consideration at the September meeting. It is envisaged that the only changes to be made at this stage will be typographical errors. Members with responsibility for updating the action plan, which will be published separately but at the same time as the strategy, were asked to forward amendments to the DV Unit by Friday 8 July 2005.

Action: Members to forward final drafting amendments to the strategy to DV Unit by Friday 8 July 2005.

Action: Members to forward amendments to action plan to DV Unit by Friday 8 July 2005.

Action: DV Unit and Community Safety Unit to liaise and forward submission to Ministers seeking approval to print and publish.

- 6.2 Members noted that the intended date for launch of the strategy and action plan is 10 October 2005 (subject to Ministerial approval). Members agreed that an opening speech by a Minister and short presentations from a number of Statutory and Voluntary organisations would be appropriate for the launch. Mr Hamilton asked Mr Shiels to liaise with relevant Members in relation to possible presentations and to prepare a draft paper on handling of the launch for discussion at the September meeting.

Action: Mr Shiels to contact relevant Members in relation to presentations.

Action: Mr Shiels to prepare paper on handling of launch for discussion at next RSG meeting.

7. Draft Criteria for Domestic Violence Fund

- 7.1 Mr Shiels informed members the DV Unit is looking at draft criteria for the Domestic Violence Development Fund and will issue to Members for consideration.

Action: DV Unit to issue draft criteria to Members.

Action: Item to be placed on agenda for discussion at next RSG meeting.

8. Draft Regional Guidelines on Good Practice and Standards

- 8.1 The DV Unit is developing draft Guidelines on Good Practice and Standards for all agencies and professional groups who come into contact with domestic violence. A copy will be issued to Members for consideration in due course. Members agreed that this item should be considered by all Sub-Groups and that a small group of Local Fora Chairs should be asked to consider and develop the document further when drafted.

Action: Place on agenda for Sub-Group meetings.

- 8.2 Ms Harley reported that she had written again to CSP Co-ordinators in relation to forming partnerships with Local DV Partnerships, as a poor response had been received initially. The Group agreed that Board Members should also follow up on the matter with Local DV Partnership Chairs.

Action: Board Members to contact Local Partnership Chairs to ensure the involvement of CSPs.

9. Raising The Standards Conference 6 & 7 February 2006

9.1 Ms Austin informed members that she had received about twenty replies to the invitation to attend the Raising The Standards conference which is to be held in the Hilton Hotel, Belfast on 6 and 7 February 2006. Invitations to the event will be reissued to all RSG. Members were asked to respond as soon as possible as consideration may need to be given to extending the invitation to some people outside of the Regional Steering Group and its Sub-Groups.

Action: Ms Austin to reissue invitation and Members to confirm attendance.

9.2 Consideration is being given to hosting a poster exhibition by Garda Colm Dempsey as part of the conference. Mr Dempsey's exhibition features around 400 anti-violence posters from over 50 countries. The posters focus on domestic violence and issues such as child sexual abuse, rape, sexual assault, and commercial sexual exploitation. The exhibition has attracted some international attention but has not yet been exhibited in Belfast. Mr Shiels, Ms Harley and Ms Austin have arranged a meeting with Mr Dempsey to discuss the matter further.

9.3 The theme of the conference will be "Working Together to Prevent Abuse" with a focus on Prevention, Education and Inter-Agency Co-operation. Each jurisdiction will be given the opportunity to present an example of good practice. Mr Shiels advised that at present the Non-Violent Relationship Project and the Barnardos' Risk Assessment model were 2 possible candidates for the NI presentation. He asked members to notify the DV Unit of any other possible joint statutory/voluntary initiatives for presentation at the conference.

Action: Members to give consideration to possible joint statutory/voluntary initiatives for presentation and send suggestions to DV Unit asap.

9.4 It is hoped that either NIO or DHSSPS Minister will open the conference and host a dinner for delegates on the evening of 6 February 2006.

Action: Mr Shiels/Ms Harley to seek Ministerial attendance

9.5 Mr Shiels informed Members that a meeting of the Raising The Standards Group will take place in Guernsey on 8 July 2005 and progress on the conference programme would be reported to the September RSG.

10. Statistics

10.1 A copy of statistics supplied by NIWAF in relation to the new Free-phone Domestic Violence Helpline had been circulated to Members. It was noted that for the period February 05 – May 05, there had been a 26% increase in calls when compared to the same period in 2004. Ms Graham pointed out that there had been an increase in calls from rural areas in the February 05 – May 05 period and that this was probably due to the introduction of a Free-phone service.

10.1.1 Mr Shiels informed members that he, Ms Harley and Mr Graham (co-founders of the Helpline) had met recently with NIWAF to consider the Telephone Helplines Association's Report on the Helpline. Consideration is now being given to the recommendations made in the Report to develop the Helpline. RSG members will be kept informed of progress.

10.2 Mr Shiels reported that the DV unit had done some work on a draft framework for the collection and management of domestic violence data. The draft document will be considered by the Information Sub-Group at its next meeting and will then be issued wider for consideration.

11. Any other business

11.1 *Forthcoming Home Office Documents*

1. Practitioner Guide - Tackling Domestic Violence: developing and implementing strategies to support victims in rural area
2. Domestic violence and substance use: overlapping issues, separate services?" - Key Findings from STELLA Project

Members noted the forthcoming Home Office documents and agreed that the DV Unit should consider and identify if there are any significant issues that should be included in our strategy.

Action: DV Unit to consider documents and amend strategy if appropriate.

11.2 Mr Knox asked for a supply of the amended Free-phone Helpline cards. It was agreed that only the amended cards should be issued in future although there was no need to recall old cards.

Action: Ms Graham to forward a supply of Helpline cards to CoSO.

12. Date, time and venue for next meeting(s).

12.1 The next meeting of the Regional Steering Group has been arranged for 8 September 2005 at 10.00 a.m. in Room 144, Parliament Buildings.