

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

Tuesday 19 September 2006 at 10.00 a.m.

Conference Room, 4th floor, Millennium House, Belfast

Present: Conal Devitt (NIO) – Chair
Liz Shaw (SHSSB)
Deirdre Webb (EHSSB)
Catherine Reilly (UCHT)
Cheryl Lamont (PBNi)
Anne Graham (WAF) - *for Annie Campbell*
Michael Graham (NIHE)
Sharon Harley (NIO)
Mairead Lavery (PPS)
Clare Irvine (OLR)
Joan Hynes (NICtS) *for Eric Strain*
Susan Reid (Victim Support)
Kevin Shiels (DV Unit)
Marie Austin (DV Unit)
Stephen Baird (DSD) – *for Janis Hatchell*
Leslie Frew (DHSSPS)
Pauline Leeson (CiNI)
Pauline Mooney (PSNI)
John Duffy (EHSSB)
Maxine McCutcheon (MAP)
Margaret Black (NHSSB)
Mervyn Bates RM (NICtS)

Apologies: Grace Henry (Help The Aged/Age Concern)
Eamon McTernan (WHSSB)
Hilary Harbinson (OFMDFM)
Peter O'Brien (Law Society)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Mr Devitt (Chair) welcomed everyone to the ninth meeting of the Regional Steering Group and updated members on changes to the membership of the group:
- Ms Janis Hatchell had replaced Mr Brendan Devlin (DSD)
 - Ms Grace Henry had replaced Linda Robinson (Help The Aged/Age Concern)
 - Mr John Duffy had replaced Mr John Devaney (EHSSB) – this is a temporary appointment as Mr Devaney's replacement is not yet in post
 - Mr Mervyn Bates RM had replaced Mr Ken Nixon RM (NICtS)
- Members agreed that a letter of thanks should issue to members who have left the Group.

Action: DV Unit to issue letters of thanks for Mr Devitt

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2006

- 2.1 Members agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2006 without amendment.

3. Correspondence

- 3.1 Mr Devitt informed members that he had received correspondence from NSPCC requesting representation on the Regional Steering Group and had met with the organisation to discuss the matter. Members considered the request and after discussion agreed that a representative from NSPCC should be invited to sit on the group.
Action: Community Safety Unit to write to NSPCC seeking details of a representative

- 3.2 Mr Devitt reported that, due to other commitments, Mr James Knox (CoSO) was no longer able to sit on the group. Members agreed that a letter should issue to CoSO requesting a representative to replace Mr Knox.
Action: DV Unit to write to CoSO seeking details of a representative

4. Matters arising

4.1.1 Training Strategy Working Group

Mr Shiels reported that the Training Strategy Working Group had held two meetings and was hopeful that after a further meeting it may be in a position to issue the latest draft Training Strategy for consultation.

- 4.1.2 Mr Shiels informed members that the DV Unit had submitted a bid for £50k from April 2007 to fund a training co-ordinator (3 years) and that the Training Strategy Working Group had agreed that if the bid were not successful, the launch of the strategy should be deferred until funds became available. Mr Frew indicated that the outcome of the bidding process should be known shortly after Christmas 2006.

4.2 Responses to the workplace policy survey

Ms Austin reported that of those employers who had responded:

- 56 employers had no plans to introduce a domestic violence workplace policy
- 126 employers are considering or intend to consider the introduction of a policy
- 20 employers already have or intend to introduce a policy.

The Information Sub-Group will be considering possible follow-up of employers and other ways to encourage more employers to adopt a policy.

- 4.3 *Calendar of forthcoming events*
Members considered the calendar of forthcoming events that had issued with the agenda and agreed that an updated calendar should be issued with each RSG agenda. Ms Austin asked that organisations send details of any event they wish to be included in the calendar to the DV unit.
Action: Members to send details of events to DV Unit as and when they have details
- 4.4 *Action Plans for 2006/07 - Local Domestic Violence Partnerships*
Mr Shiels informed members that the DV Unit had requested a copy of each Local Domestic Violence Partnership's Action Plan. A number of Action Plans are outstanding and members agreed that a reminder should issue. When all Plans have been received the DV Unit will prepare a summary of responses for information of RSG members
Action: DV Unit to issue reminder to Local Domestic Violence Partnership Chairs
- 4.5 *Barnardos Risk Assessment Model – position in Western Board*
Mr Devitt informed members that the Barnardos Risk Assessment Model is continuing to be rolled out in the Southern, Eastern and Northern Boards. The Western Board is awaiting the outcome of a pilot on another assessment model - Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland (UNOCINI) before deciding whether it will adopt the Barnardos Model.
- 4.6 *Adoption of Strategy definition of domestic violence*
Ms Austin informed members that all relevant departments/agencies had been asked to notify the DV Unit of the definition of domestic violence used. The adoption of the Strategy's definition of domestic violence was a specific action in the Action Plan that accompanied the Strategy. Some responses are still outstanding, despite a reminder being issued, and Members agreed that a further reminder should be issued.
Action: DV Unit to issue reminder

5. Update on work on Sub-Groups

5.1 Domestic Violence and Law Sub-Group

Ms Harley informed Members that the Domestic Violence and Law Sub-Group had last met on 22 June 2006. Members are currently looking at what should go into the Protection and Justice section of the next Action Plan. Other issues being considered by the Sub-Group are dealt with as substantive items in the minutes.

5.2 Information Sub-Group

Ms Reilly's informed Members that the Information Sub-Group had met on 13 June 2006 and provided an update on developments:

- *Media Campaign*
Ms Reilly highlighted the importance of continuing support from Departments/Agencies for ongoing campaigns and thanked the NIO, DHSSPS, DSD, PSNI for their funding support this year.
- *Young People's Behaviour and Attitudes Survey*
The Young People's Behaviour and Attitudes Survey is unlikely to happen this Autumn. The Information Sub-Group will consider at the next meeting (5.10.06) how to survey the attitudes of young people in relation to domestic violence: e.g postpone until next Survey; or undertake a specific survey on domestic violence.
- *Routine Enquiry in Maternity Units*
The DHSSPS policy circular on routine enquiry in maternity units is due to be issued shortly. In the meantime, Trusts are moving ahead with implementation.
- *Updating Domestic Violence Guidance for Faith Communities*
The Working Group has had two meetings so far and expect to be in a position by the end of the year to consult widely on draft guidelines. The Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities will be approached to explore ways in which to engage minority faith groups. *Mr Devitt suggested that the Sub-Group consult with OFMDFM on the matter.*
Action: DV unit to contact Billy Gamble OFMDFM
- *Guidelines for Employers and UK Corporate Alliance*
The Sub-Group will be considering ways in which to encourage more employers to adopt workplace policies. On 11 September 2006, Ms Reilly, Mr Shiels and Ms Harley attended a reception in Downing Street, hosted by the Prime Minister and Mrs Blair in recognition of those working on domestic violence policy and to promote the UK Corporate Alliance Against Domestic Violence. The Corporate Alliance will hold its AGM on 28 September 2006 and representatives from the DV Unit will attend.
- *Collection and management of domestic violence data*
The draft research proposal on the collection and analysis of domestic violence data is still being considered (had been sent to all members for comment). It is likely to be the end of the financial year before recommendations will be made on the way forward.

5.3 **Children and Young People Sub-Group**

Ms Shaw informed Members that the Sub-Group had last met on 13 September 2006 and provided an update on developments:

- *Appointment of Chair and Deputy Chair*
Liz Shaw was appointed as Chair of the Sub-Group and Caroline Holloway (NSPCC) as Deputy Chair

- *Domestic violence on the school curriculum*
The Department of Education and CCEA will consult the Sub-Group on new guidance for schools on how domestic violence should be covered under the Personal Development strand of the new curriculum. DE is also updating Child Protection guidance and has agreed to include a section on domestic violence in the revised Guidance
- *Children Order Advisory Committee – Best Practice Guidance*
The Children Order Advisory Committee is currently revising its Best Practice Guidance for courts on domestic violence and children - the Children and Young People Sub-Group is feeding into that review. The Sub-Group is also mapping what guidance is already in use by voluntary and statutory agencies on working with children affected by domestic violence. The Sub-Group will then consider whether further guidance for Northern Ireland is needed.
- *Child contact centres*
The Children and Young People's Funding Package included £500k for the expansion of child contact centre services. The Children and Young People Sub-Group is not responsible for the development of child contact centres but will be keeping a watching brief. The Office of Law Reform, DHSSPS and the Court Service are planning the way forward on development and use of the additional funding which will be available from April 2007.
- *NSPCC Pilot Projects*
NSPCC's Family Support Services have developed 2 pilot projects to address the specific needs of children and families impacted by Domestic Violence. The pilots are taking place in the Foyle Team area and the Clanna Family Support Team area Belfast.

6. Recent Media Campaign - update

- 6.1 Members viewed the recent domestic violence TV ad depicting psychological abuse and listened to the Many Forms radio ad and the radio ad targeted at male victims. Mr Shiels informed members that the same ads would run again in January 2007.
- 6.2 Ms Austin reported that over 4000 posters had been distributed to GP surgeries, dental surgeries, chemists, solicitors, courts, support groups and colleges throughout Northern Ireland.
- 6.3 Ms Graham informed members that early indications had shown an increase in calls to the Domestic Violence Free-phone Helpline during the media campaign. There was an 18% rise in calls at the start of the campaign and a 15% rise for the remainder. Ms McCutcheon added that, during the media campaign, she had dealt with 14 calls from male victims (more than triple the amount from the previous month) and 3 calls from female perpetrators (triple the amount from the previous month). Ms Graham and Ms McCutcheon agreed to provide the DV

Unit with final figures, including comparisons, in relation to calls received during the media campaign.

Action: Ms Graham and Ms McCutcheon to forward information to the DV Unit for distribution to members

- 6.4 Mr Devitt extended his thanks to the Scottish Executive for the use of its media material.

7. **'Tackling Violence at Home - the position one year on' conference - 24 October 2006, Comfort Hotel, Antrim**

- 7.1 Members considered the revised draft programme for "Tackling Violence at Home - The Position One Year On" conference on 24 October 2006 in Comfort Hotel Antrim (attached at Annex 1).

- 7.2 Three teams will each give a presentation on progress so far under the headings

- 1) Prevention - Catherine Reilly (UCHT) and Stephanie Mallon (WAF)
- 2) Protection and Justice – Mairead Lavery (PPS) and Clare Irvine (OLR)
- 3) Support and Other Priorities – Liz Shaw (SHSSB) and Caroline Holloway (NSPCC).

The same teams will lead the discussion in the workshops and report back to the full meeting.

- 7.3 Mr Shiels informed members that the Conference Steering Group had recently met with Local Domestic Violence Partnership Chairs to discuss the format of the conference and consider progress in relation to the Strategy Action Plan. A number of Chairs provided information on initiatives in their local areas, which will be included in the progress report. Mr Shiels asked that RSG members should also inform the DV Unit if there are any initiatives from their respective organisations that they feel should be highlighted at the conference.

Action: All RSG members to consider and inform the DV Unit of any initiatives they feel should be highlighted at the conference

- 7.4 Ms Austin reminded members that places for the conference were limited and that any outstanding conference registration forms should be returned as soon as possible.

Action: Members to return conference registration forms to the DV Unit

8. **Review of Public Administration**

- 8.1.1 Mr Frew informed members that the Chief Executive of the Health and Social Services Authority had taken up his post in August 2006. Mr Frew also reported that the five new Chief Executives of the new HSS Trusts had been appointed and will take up their posts on the first of September 2006 to begin work on getting their new organisations ready for the move to the new Trust structures on the 1 April 2007.

- 8.1.2 Ms Leeson reported that responsibility for Early Years would be transferring from DHSSPS to the Department of Education, therefore it would be important to keep a watching brief.
- 8.1.3 Mr Graham informed members that it is possible that the NIHE Supporting People budget may be moved to the Councils under RPA.
- 8.1.4 Ms Mooney reported that under the new RPA arrangements there would be 8 District Policing Units.
- 8.2 Members agreed that this item should be kept on the agenda for future meetings as the changes would likely impact on the membership of RSG etc and on the possible amalgamation of local dv partnerships.

9. Honour based violence (hbv) and ‘murders in the name of so-called honour’ – leaflet produced by the Association of Chief Police Officers of England, Wales and Northern Ireland

- 9.1.1 Ms Mooney reported that she is developing guidelines for the PSNI on how to deal with the issue of forced marriage. She suggested that the leaflet produced by the Association of Chief Police Officers of England, Wales and Northern Ireland (ACPO) on Honour based violence (hbv) and ‘murders in the name of so-called honour’ could be reproduced specifically for Northern Ireland.
- 9.1.2 Ms Harley informed members that England and Wales had issued a consultation document on Forced Marriage asking whether or not there should be a criminal offence of forced marriage. Having consulted with others as to whether or not the consultation should include Northern Ireland the decision was taken that it should not. There was no evidence to suggest that Forced marriage was an issue in Northern Ireland and that Northern Ireland would await the outcome of the England and Wales consultation before making a decision about issuing a consultation document in Northern Ireland. Members agreed that the Domestic Violence and the Law Sub-Group should consider the matter further.
Action: Ms Harley to check position on England and Wales consultation and to place discussion of ACPO leaflet and forced marriages on the agenda for the next DV and the Law Sub-Group meeting

10. One-Stop-Shop

- 10.1 Ms Harley reminded members that the recommendation from Deloitte on the One-Stop-Shop had been sent to members of the Regional Steering Group for comment. So far only four responses had been received. Ms Harley asked that any outstanding responses be sent to her as soon as possible. Ms Reid, Ms Graham and Ms Lamont

expressed their wish to view a copy of the full report to allow them to make a more informed response.

Action: Members to forward a response to the One-Stop-Shop recommendation to Ms Harley by 6 October 2006. Mrs Harley to consider further the request for a full report to be made available.

11. Any other business

11.1 Ms Reid referred to earlier discussions about risk assessments undertaken by different agencies and highlighted the need for a common risk assessment framework for use by all relevant agencies.

11.2 Ms Reilly asked if any consideration was being given to the issue of specialist domestic violence courts in Northern Ireland. Mr Bates RM reported that Justice Gillen had proposed an overarching system for addressing all cases involving children and families. It was agreed that the DV and Law Sub-Group should consider this matter further

Action: Specialist courts to be considered by the DV and Law Sub-Group

11.3 Ms Mooney highlighted the difficulties faced by victims who cannot afford a non-molestation/occupation order. Ms Irvine suggested that the issue be raised with the Legal Services Commission and possibly also with the Law Society. Members agreed that the DV and Law Sub-Group should consider this matter further.

Action: To be considered at the next DV and Law Sub-Group meeting

11.4 Mr Frew asked members if the implementation of the Strategy and the progress made under the actions associated with it had improved the situation for victims of domestic violence. Ms Shiels advised that all activity associated with the Strategy had raised awareness of domestic violence and that future analysis of the Performance Indicators would give some indication of its success.

12. Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference Pilot – Presentation by Pauline Mooney PSNI

Ms Pauline Mooney updated members on the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference Pilot:

- Pilot project commenced on 1 April 2006 covering 4 DCUs – Antrim, Carrickfergus, Larne and Ballymena
- Involved PSNI, Probation, Homefirst Adult Services, Eldercare, Childrens Services, Mental health, NIHE, Health, Women's Aid, Victim Support
- Summary of strengths of pilot:
 1. Number of arrests/MODV referrals increased
 2. Repeat victimisation reduced
 3. Greater interagency understanding and collaboration
 4. Positive feedback from victims

5. MARAC booklets used positively in court
 6. Provides referrals for high risk cases for support
- Summary of weaknesses
 1. Inconsistency in interagency collaboration in certain individual agencies/areas
 2. Not always agreement and clarity of urgency amongst individuals
 3. Information sharing protocol not signed up to
 4. Accountability for response not always actioned by some individuals
 5. Different levels of understanding and training amongst practitioners
 6. Administration work under resourced
 7. Variance amongst DCUs (statistical)
 8. Bureaucracy of paper trail
 - Provides an opportunity to greatly enhance the safety of victims on a province-wide basis
 - Absence of information sharing protocol is a major threat to success
 - Commitment from all relevant agencies (at a high level) is needed
 - Evaluation will be available in November 2006

Note: A copy of the presentation has been emailed to all RSG members and any queries should be directed to Pauline Mooney PSNI

13. Dates of the next meeting

13.1 The following date was agreed for the next meeting of the Regional Steering Group:

- Tuesday 5 December 2006 at 10.00 a.m. in **Probation Board Headquarters, 80 to 90 North St, Belfast**

Meetings would usually be held in Parliament Buildings. However, (depending on the political situation) meeting rooms may not be available in Parliament Buildings in the future. Mr Shiels asked that members contact the Domestic Violence Unit if they would be able to provide a suitable room for RSG meetings (for at least 25 people).

Action: Members to contact DV Unit if able to provide meeting rooms for future meetings probably in March, June, September and December 2007.

'TACKLING VIOLENCE AT HOME – THE POSITION ONE YEAR ON'

COMFORT HOTEL, ANTRIM - TUESDAY 24 OCTOBER 2006

DRAFT PROGRAMME

Approximate timings

10.00 a.m.

Registration and Tea/Coffee

10.30 a.m.

Air recent TV and Radio Ads

Introduction to the day (Conal Devitt, Chair of RSG)

10.40 a.m.

Keynote speaker

11.00 a.m.

Presentations – “Progress in first year of Strategy”

3 x 20 min presentations

- Prevention (Catherine Reilly and Stephanie Mallon)
- Protection and Justice (Clare Irvine and Mairead Lavery)
- Support and Other Priorities (Liz Shaw and Caroline Holloway)

12.00 noon

Video (No.1)

12.20 p.m.

Lunch

1.10 p.m.

Video (No.2)

1.20 p.m.

Explanation of afternoon session

1.30 p.m

Look forward to 2007/08 Action Plan Priorities

3 workshops (prevention; protection and justice; and, support and other priorities)

2.30 p.m.

Feedback sessions

3x15 min report back sessions, with 5 min Q&A at the end of each

Approx 3.30 p.m.

Close