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MÁNNYSTRIE O

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an Fowk Siccar**

GUIDELINES ON THE CONSTITUTION AND OPERATION OF LOCAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PARTNERSHIPS

NORTHERN IRELAND REGIONAL STEERING GROUP
ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

CONTENTS	Page
Introduction	2
Purpose of Guidance	2
Review of Public Administration	2
Overall aims of Partnerships	3
Good Practice Guidelines for Individual Agencies	3
Structure and Organisation of Local Domestic Violence Partnerships	4
Domestic Violence Co-ordinator	7
Training on Domestic Violence	7
Workplace Policies on Domestic Violence	8
Corporate Alliance on Domestic Violence	9
Annexes	
Annex 1 List of agencies to be considered for membership of Local Domestic Violence Partnerships	
Annex 2 What is Domestic Violence and Abuse	
Annex 3 Suggested Terms of Reference for Local Domestic Violence Partnerships	

Introduction

1. In the mid-1990s structures were put in place throughout Northern Ireland, at local Health and Social Services Trust level, to bring together all the relevant agencies to share knowledge and experience on domestic violence, to undertake awareness raising and to address local issues. They were known as local domestic violence forums.
2. In the light of the domestic violence strategy (*Tackling Violence at Home, October 2005*), all the local fora have been or should be re-vamped to extend membership to all relevant agencies including community safety partnerships. Local fora in all areas should now be known as *Local Domestic Violence Partnerships*.

Purpose of Guidance

3. The purpose of this guidance is to encourage good practice and consistency across Northern Ireland in the constitution and functioning of Local Domestic Violence Partnerships.

Review of Public Administration

4. Structures are likely to change, within health and social services and other areas of the public service, as a result of the review of public administration. In the Southern Board area the 3 local Partnerships have already amalgamated into a single Partnership and amalgamations are being considered in other areas. Whatever structures are put in place, however, it is vital that links are maintained and developed by all the agencies involved in the Local Domestic Violence Partnerships to ensure that the best possible service is provided to victims and their children. Annex 1 provides a list of agencies which should be considered for membership.

5. Members of LDVPs should be of an appropriate level of seniority within their parent organisation to allow them to participate fully in the discussions and actions of the LDVP and to enable them to influence positive change within their organisations.

Overall Aims of Partnerships

6. The overall aims of Local Domestic Violence Partnerships should reflect the main aims of Tackling Violence at Home which are:
 - To improve services and support for all victims of domestic violence;
 - To develop and deliver a high quality, co-ordinated multi-agency response to domestic violence;
 - To further increase and develop awareness generally about domestic violence and the measures in place to help the victims;
 - To educate children and young people and the wider general public that domestic violence is wrong and is unacceptable and to enable them to make informed choices; and
 - To hold perpetrators/abusers accountable and provide effective interventions for their behaviour.

Good Practice Guidelines for Individual Agencies

7. A separate set of good practice guidance is being developed, for use by the numerous agencies involved in addressing domestic violence, to try to ensure that there is some consistency of approach in identifying victims or providing services to them.

Structure and Organisation of Local Domestic Violence Partnerships

8. Existing Partnerships should review and develop their structures in line with the following guidelines:
- Partnerships (i.e those which have not already done so) should formalise their existing multi-agency arrangements by drawing up a simple and straightforward written document that sets out the aims of the partnership, the roles of the agencies etc.
 - A specimen template for Terms of Reference is included at Annex 3 but Partnerships are encouraged to learn from and assist one another, for example, by sharing existing Mission Statements, Protocols or other written Agreements. The Southern Area Partnership and the Sperrin Lakeland Partnership have already produced written inter-agency agreements which may be helpful to others.
 - The Partnership should be known as the ‘ the *[Name]* Local/Area Domestic Violence Partnership’;
 - All relevant agencies should be invited to join the Partnership, with the active involvement of policy-makers and practitioners. Annex 1 provides a list of agencies which should be considered for membership;
 - All member agencies (and their nominated representatives) should be clear about the aims and objectives, structure, the terms of reference and the co-ordination of the Partnership, and their specific roles and responsibilities in relation to the Partnership. A programme aimed at Developing Successful Partnerships is available and some Local Domestic Violence Partnerships have already benefited from it. All member agencies should ensure that there is commitment at the highest level within their organisations to the work of the Partnership;
 - All member agencies should ensure that *all* Partnership

meetings and/or sub-group meetings are attended by the nominated representative or a substitute;

- To supplement current funding from DHSSPS for Local Partnerships, all member agencies, and particularly the statutory agencies, should endeavour to obtain from their own organisations, some additional resources (financial or staffing or other) for the Partnership. This could support the employment of a coordinator or support the Partnership's initiatives;
- All member agencies should participate in networking and information-sharing:
 - o with other members on the Partnership;
 - o with their area HSC representative on the Regional Steering Group on Domestic Violence (via the Partnership's chair.

9. Local Domestic Violence Partnerships should:

- Continue to develop their multi-agency partnerships to oversee the implementation of the Strategy at a local/area level;
- Consider setting up sub-groups or ad hoc groups to consider specific themes or issues (e.g. prevention issues; protection and justice issues; support services; children's issues; ethnic minority issues). Sub-Groups should have clear terms of reference; roles and responsibilities etc
- Develop links to other corporate planning structures within the HSC trust's area of responsibility (child protection; vulnerable adults etc) and encourage their consideration of domestic violence;
- Adopt the Strategy's definition of domestic violence and abuse (see Annex 2);
- Develop and display a statement of policy/mission statement in relation to domestic violence and abuse which is consistent with

the Strategy's vision and aims;

- Prepare an annual Action Plan (covering the period April to March) to implement the Strategy at local level and to complement the annual Action Plan of the Regional Steering Group;
- Develop local initiatives in line with the Strategy's aims;
- Identify the appropriate organisation(s) within its membership for addressing specific issues which arise and work co-operatively with these organisations;
- The annual local action plan should:
 - o Be based on the needs of victims in the area covered by the Partnership;
 - o Identify gaps in local domestic violence services and priorities for local service delivery;
 - o Recognise and endeavour to address the specific needs of particular groups of victims e.g. local minority ethnic groups, the elderly;
 - o Recognise and endeavour to address the specific needs of children;
 - o Recognise and define the links between domestic violence and other issues such as community safety, health issues (including pregnancy; alcohol and substance misuse) and criminal justice matters;
- Promote equality of opportunity for all in accessing domestic violence services.

Domestic Violence Coordinator

10. Some Partnerships have benefited greatly from the employment of a local coordinator on a full-time or part-time basis and all partnerships should consider such an appointment. A dedicated coordinator, can ensure that the Partnership is much more effective by progressing its work on many fronts including for example: working directly with and coordinating the efforts of the partnership's member agencies; organising and minuting meetings of the Partnership and sub-groups; drafting protocols and annual action plans; organising training and other Partnership events; liaising with local employers to develop and implement workplace policies; organising local awareness raising and advertising of services for victims; identifying sources of funding for the Partnership's initiatives; and liaising, along with the Partnership chair, with the local/area representative on the Regional Steering Group or with the Domestic Violence Unit. Coordinators should receive training on domestic violence and on multi-agency working.

Training on Domestic Violence

11. Existing and new members of Local Domestic Violence Partnerships should receive training on domestic violence to give them an understanding of the many complex issues involved and the need for effective inter and multi-agency working and collaboration. Such training should be organised by the Partnership periodically and should involve input from the key agencies.
12. On the wider training front, the level of understanding of domestic violence among staff in a range of agencies can have an impact in the prevention of abuse. The responses of individual staff to victims and their level of understanding of the issue can affect not only the quality of the service, but also the subsequent experiences of victims.
13. A Northern Ireland Multi-Agency Training Strategy is being developed for publication in 2007. In the meantime, Local Domestic Violence

Partnerships and their member agencies should proceed with any existing or pre-arranged training of relevant staff using the broad guidelines below:

- Ensure that a programme of staff training is available in relation to domestic violence which includes the need for staff/practitioners to challenge their own attitudes on domestic violence;
- Provide basic awareness-raising to all relevant staff in relation to domestic violence;
- Provide more in-depth training to those staff who are most likely to have contact with victims (covering factual awareness of the nature and scope of domestic violence, attitudinal awareness and knowledge of other agencies);
- Participate in inter-agency and multi-agency training, but provide service-specific training to complement this;
- Ensure that the training is provided on an ongoing basis and is updated regularly to address practice;
- Involve specialist organisations such as Women's Aid, PSNI, Men's Advisory Project, and other agencies in conjunction, where appropriate, with in-house training providers;
- Evaluate the quality and impact of training.

Workplace Policies on Domestic Violence

14. Members of Local Domestic Violence Partnerships should recognise that staff within each of their own organisations may experience or perpetrate domestic violence. All the relevant participating agencies should be leading by example by encouraging their organisation's personnel/welfare staff to develop a domestic violence workplace policy. Specific guidance has been produced by the Regional

Steering Group for this purpose - “Guidelines for Employers on Developing A Domestic Violence Workplace Policy”. Copies are available from the Domestic Violence Unit, DHSSPS.

Corporate Alliance Against Domestic Violence

15. Individual organisations should also consider joining the Corporate Alliance Against Domestic Violence. This is a group of companies who have joined together to address domestic violence by supporting staff who are victims. Organisations only need to have a workplace policy in place and commit to attending one meeting of the Alliance each year. Useful information including a template for a workplace policy is available on the Alliance’s website at www.corporatealliance.com

16. Local Domestic Violence Partnerships should review periodically the position on workplace policies and membership of the Corporate Alliance among its member agencies. Partnerships should also consider ways to engage employers across all sectors in its area and encourage them to adopt a policy and join the Corporate Alliance.

Annex 1

List of Agencies to be considered for membership of Local Domestic Violence Partnerships

This list is not exhaustive. Members can be invited either as full members on the Partnership or if more appropriate and agreed by the parties involved, on an *'as and when required'* basis. Alternatively an agency may be represented only on a sub-group.

- Women's Aid
- Victim Support
- PSNI
- Housing Executive
- Voluntary and Community Groups
- Social Security Agency
- Citizen's Advice Bureau
- Solicitor
- GP
- Nursing
- Hospital
- Mental Health
- Clergy
- Education/School
- Community Safety Partnership
- Education Welfare Officer
- Probation Board
- NSPCC
- Barnardos
- Vulnerable Adults Partnership
- Organisations representing male victims
- Organisations representing victims in same-sex relationships
- Local Drugs and Alcohol Coordination team

Annex 2

What is Domestic Violence and Abuse?

Definition

The definition of domestic violence and abuse set out in 'Tackling Violence at Home' and which all local domestic violence partnerships and relevant agencies should use is: ***“threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on one person by another where they are or have been intimate partners or family members, irrespective of gender or sexual orientation.”***

Domestic violence and abuse is essentially a pattern of behaviour which is characterised by the exercise of control and the misuse of power by one person over another within an intimate relationship or a family. It is usually frequent and persistent. It can include violence by a son, daughter or any other person who has a close or blood relationship with the victim.

Domestic Violence occurs right across society. It knows no boundaries as regards age, gender, race, ethnic or religious group, sexual orientation, wealth, disability or geography. There is no symmetry and in the majority of cases men are the perpetrators and women are the victims. However, there are also male victims of female abuse and there are victims in same-sex relationships.

The abuse can go beyond actual physical violence. It can involve emotional abuse - for example: undermining of self-confidence; threats to others including children; controlling behaviour such as isolation from friends and family; control over access to money, personal items, food, transportation or the telephone; the destruction of property and stalking.

The wide adverse effects of living with domestic violence for children must be recognised as a child protection issue. The effects are linked to poor educational achievement, social exclusion and to juvenile crime, substance

misuse, mental health problems and homelessness.

Domestic violence includes the abuse of older people. While the profile of child abuse has been raised in recent years, many people continue to be less aware of the problem of elder abuse.

It is acknowledged that domestic violence can also manifest itself through the actions of immediate and extended family members through the perpetuation of unlawful activities, such as forced marriage, so called 'honour crimes' and female genital mutilation. Extended family members may condone or even share in the pattern of violence.

Annex 3

Suggested Terms of Reference for Local Domestic Violence Partnerships

(The following specimen template for Terms of Reference has been adapted broadly from those of some existing partnerships and may be useful in whole or in part for adaptation by other partnerships)

- The Partnership will convene a minimum of [x] business meetings annually. The location and venue will be [fixed/rotated]. An annual planning day will be held to review work of the Partnership and to agree plans for the forthcoming year.
- The Chair of the Partnership will be rotated on a [x] - yearly basis and will be drawn from the existing members of the Partnership. The resident Chair will provide administration and hospitality requirements.
- The Partnership will be committed to uphold the values of good practice indicators inherent in multi-disciplinary and inter-agency working. Members will commit themselves to working in partnership to ensure a co-ordinated response to promote joint working, co-operation and mutual support.
- The Partnership will create a mission statement which will reflect the partnership's aims, objectives and commitment to working on a multi-agency basis. The role and functions of the Partnership's sub-groups and arrangements for membership, meetings and links will be incorporated into the mission statement.
- A person of sufficient seniority from each member agency will be expected to attend Partnership meetings. If unable to attend, a member will be expected to provide an apology. If appropriate, absent members will be invited to submit written comments for discussion at the Partnership. Following three consecutive non-attendances at the Partnership,

membership will be reviewed and the relevant agency will be asked to nominate a new representative.

- Members will share relevant information at meetings and contribute to the agenda as appropriate. Members will also inform their own agency on any implications resulting from decisions made at Partnership meetings.
- Member agencies must ensure that their representative on the Partnership has a formal mechanism to exchange information and to provide feedback effectively between the Partnership and their own organisation. This will allow for reciprocity of information and ensure the meaningful contribution of each agency to the Partnership.

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