

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

Wednesday 2 October 2007 at 10.30 a.m.

NSPCC, Glendermott Road, Londonderry

Present: Bernie Stuart (DHSSPS) – Chair
Mark Goodfellow (NIO)
Sharon Harley (NIO)
Jo O'Reilly (NIO)
Mairead Lavery (PPS)
Ruth Peattie (DSD) (for Susan McCarty)
Mark Peters (PSNI)
Colm Elliott (NSPCC)
Orla Conway (Omagh Women's Aid)

Michael Sweeney (DV Unit)
Paul Cassidy (DV Unit)

Apologies: Catherine Reilly (SEHSC Trust)
Hilary Harbinson (OFMDFM)
Pauline Leeson (CiNI)
Duane Farrell (Help The Aged)
Liz Shaw (SHSSB)
Peter O'Brien (Law Society)
Mary Quinn (EHSSB)
Joan Hynes (NI Court Service)
Mervyn Bates (RM)
Margaret Black (NHSSB)

1. Introduction

1.1 Dr Stuart (Chair) welcomed everyone to the thirteenth meeting of the Regional Steering Group. Dr Stuart introduced herself as the new Chair of RSG and advised that for the foreseeable future, Conal Devitt who would not be attending RSG meetings.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 1 August 2007

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 1 August 2007 were agreed.

3. Update on Action Plan

3.1 The action plan has been endorsed by Ministers Peter Robinson and Margaret Ritchie. A response is awaited from Minister Caitriona Ruane. The Action Plan will be launched along with the Guidelines for Political Representatives on 7 November in the Long Gallery, Parliament buildings

3.2 It was suggested that a short summary paper be produced from the Action Plan identifying what action has been taken to date against each objective. This would help in drafting the next plan.

3.3. Concern has been expressed at the lack of engagement of DENI in this process. Dr Stuart reported that regular meetings now take place at senior official level between DHSSPS and DENI on a range of issues. In view of these discussions, it was considered appropriate not to raise the matter at ministerial level at the present time.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 There were no matters arising.

5. Update on work on Sub-Groups

5.1 Only the Information Sub-Group had met since the last RSG meeting. The Group had considered the C&YP survey and had agreed that, in view of the concerns with the behavioural questions, an attitudinal survey only should be undertaken at this stage. Further consideration will have to be given to the behavioural issues. The Group will also be meeting specifically to consider the direction of future DV media campaigns.

6. Media Campaigns

6.1 Secretariat are working closely with Executive Information Service (DFP) on the 2007/08 media campaign. A campaign brief has been prepared focusing on perpetrators. The campaign will run in early 2008. The information Sub-Group will be meeting to consider the focus of the media campaigns for the next few years. NIO asked to be involved in this meeting.

7. Helpline Report, April 2007 – June 2007

7.1 The following points were highlighted in the Helpline report:

- the strike rate had increased to 72%;
- there was an increase in the number of callers who did not speak English as their first language;
- there was a slight reduction in the number of male callers.

8. Review of Public Administration

8.1 DHSS - Members were advised that Mr McGimpsey, Health Minister, had decided to look again at the creation of the Special Health Authority under RPA. It is unlikely that the new Authority will be created by in April 08. However, when decisions are made it might be appropriate to review membership of RSG to take account of the abolition of Health Boards and the creation of the Authority.

8.2 Concern was expressed that this uncertainty was having adverse affects on the voluntary sector in terms of funding/planning etc. The Chair advised that DHSSPS is currently reviewing voluntary/community sector funding mechanisms and this should provide some clarity re the funding process.

8.3 PSNI has moved from 26 to 8 police districts, to align with the proposed district council (with 2 districts in Belfast).

- 9. Update on Draft – Multi Agency Training Strategy – recruitment of Training Co-ordinator**
 - 9.1 Recruitment is underway. The post has been advertised with a closing date of 21 September. Shortlisting has been arranged for 12 October, with interviews on 18 October. The Training Strategy has been finalised by the Training Sub-Group and is now being printed.

- 10. Raising the Standards Conference – Guernsey 8/9 October**
 - 10.1. Invitations were issued to delegates in August and anyone going should have confirmed attendance by now. NI has 23 delegates, which is the highest number next to Guernsey. DV Unit & NIO will fund travel and accommodation for 10 representatives from the voluntary sector.

- 11. Any Other Business**
 - 11.1 B&L Women’s Aid extended an invitation to RSG members go visit refuges in Belfast.

- 12. Date of the next meeting**
 - 14.1 The next meeting is scheduled for 11 December. The meeting will be held in Belfast. Suggestions for venues for future meetings should be forwarded to the Secretariat.

- 13. NSPCC Presentation**
 - 13.1 NSPCC staff gave a presentation on the programmes currently being piloted which provide support for children and families who live with domestic violence. A copy of the presentation is attached for information.