

# **Minutes of the twelfth meeting of the Regional Steering Group on Domestic Violence**

**Wednesday 1 August 2007 at 10.00 a.m.**

**Conference Room, 4<sup>th</sup> floor, Millennium House, Belfast**

**Present:** Conal Devitt (NIO) – Chair  
Annie Campbell (WAF)  
Mark Goodfellow (NIO)  
Mairead Lavery (PPS)  
Joan Hynes (NICtS)  
Susan McCarty (DSD)  
Duane Farrell (Help The Aged/Age Concern)  
Mark Peters (PSNI)  
Peter O'Brien (Law Society)  
Colm Elliott (NSPCC)  
Mevy Bates RM (NICtS)  
Liz Shaw (SHSSB)  
Maxine McCutcheon (MAP)  
Clara Irvine (DFP)  
Andrew Rooke (PBNI)  
Susan Reid (Victim Support)  
Helen Christie (PSNI) – for item 10  
Michael Sweeney (DV Unit)  
Paul Cassidy (DV Unit)

**Apologies:** Bernie Stuart (DHSSPS)  
Jo O'Reilly (NIO)  
Catherine Reilly (SEHSC Trust)  
Hilary Harbinson (OFMDFM)  
Sharon Harley (NIO)  
Pauline Leeson (CiNI)

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Mr Devitt (Chair) welcomed everyone to the twelfth meeting of the Regional Steering Group. He advised members that Leslie Frew, DHSSPS, had been replaced by Dr Bernie Stuart. Bernie was unable to attend today's meeting but would attend the next meeting and would take over as Chair in December 2007.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from Bernie Stuart, DHSS, Jo O'Reilly, NIO, Catherine Reilly, SEHSC Trust, Hilary Harbinson, OFMDFM, Pauline Leeson, CiNI and Sharon Harley, NIO.

## **2. Minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2007**

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2007 were agreed.

### **3. Update on Action Plan**

- 3.1 The action plan has been finalised and a joint submission to Ministers has been prepared and will issue soon. Agreement is also being sought from relevant NI Ministers to sign the forward to the Plan. Once Ministerial agreement has been secured an event will be arranged to launch the plan. Given that the Plan is being issued late in the year, a low key launch is envisaged, probably using the Guide for Political Representatives as the main event with the Action Plan being a secondary announcement.
- 3.2 Concern was expressed at the lack of engagement of DENI in this process. Several members shared this concern and it was agreed that it should be recorded. Members were advised that a submission to Minister was being prepared on the creation of the Inter-Ministerial Group on DV. Through this forum, it was hoped that DENI could be encouraged to engage. TOR for the Inter-Ministerial Group will be drawn up, based on a similar group in GB, and will be circulated to members for information.
- 3.3 The Chair offered to write to the Permanent Secretary at DENI expressing the concerns of the Group. This was agreed.
- 3.4 NIWAF advised that they were not fully happy with the Action Plan and would like to see a more “joined up” approach to the development of the next plan. Consideration will be given to an “away day” event (maybe in October) to develop the next plan.

### **4. Matters Arising**

- 4.1 There were no matters arising.

### **5. Update on work on Sub-Groups**

#### *5.1 Children & Young People Sub Group*

The Group has been conducting a stock-take on the Group’s objectives and identifying main priorities. Membership is being reviewed and TOR have been revised. The Chair of the Group intends writing to DENI Minister re lack of engagement from DENI officials. Also a meeting is being arranged with the Children’s Commissioner to discuss DV and its impact on children.

#### *5.2 Information Sub-Group*

Similar action has been taken regarding the focus and membership of the Sub-Group. The production of an NI version of the NHS Resource Manual has been identified as a priority for the Sub-Group and a meeting is to be arranged with CMO and CNO to secure their support for the manual.

#### *5.3 Domestic Violence and Law Sub-Group*

The Group has also been conducting a stock-take of objectives etc. The Group will meet in August to consider the One-Stop-Shop and MARAC. The Forced Marriage Bill, which due to be implemented in England in October/November, will extend to NI. It was suggested that RSG consider preparing guidance on forced marriages for NI. PSNI advised that guidance on forced marriage and honour crime was nearing completion.

## **6. Media Campaigns**

- 6.1 Members were advised that there is a new procedure for securing media contracts etc with each project being considered and tendered for individually, rather than there being a single media contract for the Department. The Secretariat has met with the Executive Information Service, OFMDFM, and have completed a campaign brief and advertising specification. A further meeting will be held soon to refine the documents. The campaign will focus on perpetrators, and will be based on the MET campaign. It is intended to also re-run the psychological abuse TV ads.

## **7. Helpline Report, January 2007 – March 2007**

- 7.1 The report for the period January 2007 – March 2008 included the period covered by the January media campaign and this was reflected in an increased number of calls. There was an improved “strike rate” ie a higher number of calls answered directly. There was also an increase in the number of calls from men.

## **8. Update on Guidance Documents**

- 8.1 *Guidelines of the Constitution and Operation of Local Domestic Violence Partnerships*  
This document is ready for issue.
- 8.2 *Guidance for Agencies Who May Come Into Contact With Victims of Domestic Violence and Abuse*  
This document was issued for consultation and the consultation is complete. A few comments/amendments have to be taken into account after which it will be ready for printing.
- 8.3 *Guidance for Faith Communities*  
This document was also issued for consultation. The consultation finished recently and a few comments/amendments have to be taken into account after which it will be ready for printing. It was suggested that this document could be launched during ecumenical week early in 2008.
- 8.4 *Guidance for Political Representatives*  
This document is ready for printing and will be the focus of the event at which the action plan will be released.

## **9. Review of Public Administration**

- 9.1 DHSS - Members were advised that Mr McGimpsey, Health Minister, had decided to look again at the creation of the Special Health Authority under RPA.
- 9.2 DENI – the 5 Education and Library Boards were to evolve into a single Education & Skills Authority in April 2009.

**10. MARAC – Presentation from Helen Christie, PSNI**

10.1 The Chair welcomed Helen Christie to the meeting and invited her to make her presentation. The presentation was followed by a short discussion.  
*(A copy of the presentation is attached for information).*

10.2 PSNI has not yet formally signed up to MARAC. It will be considered at a meeting on 17 September. Should PSNI agree to its roll-out, consideration will have to be given to how it is supported across NI. Funding will likely be needed for administrative support.

**11. Multi-Agency Training Strategy**

11.1 The training strategy and the job description and person specification for the training co-ordinator are complete. The training co-ordinator post should be advertised at the end of August with interviews taking place at the end of September. Members will be advised when and where the advertisement is posted.

**12.1. Raising the Standards Conference**

12.1 Invitations for the conference have been issued and the NIO/DHSSPS has identified and advised those representatives from the voluntary sector whose places will be funded. The NI presentation will be on Tuesday 9 October. A meeting will be arranged with NIWAF to consider their presentation.

**13.2. Any other business**

13.1 There was no other business.

**14. Date of the next meeting**

14.1 The next meeting is scheduled for 11 September. It was agreed that this should be put back to Tuesday 2 October. It was also agreed that the meeting would be in Londonderry and will be followed by a visit to the NSPCC offices.