

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

Friday 18 April at 10.00 a.m.

D2 Conference Room, Castle Buildings, Stormont, Belfast

Present: Bernie Stuart (DHSSPS) – Chair
Sharon Harley (NIO)
Jo O'Reilly (NIO)
Susan McCarty (DSD)
Caroline Holloway (NSPCC)
Mervyn Bates (Resident Magistrate)
Maxine McCutcheon (MAP)
Annie Campbell (WAFNI)
Andrew Rooke (PBNI)
Liz Shaw (SHSSB)
April Dalzell (NICtS)
Mairead Lavery (PPS)
Charlene Curran (DV Unit)

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

Apologies: Catherine Reilly (SEHSC Trust)
Eileen Sung (OFMDFM)
Mark Goodfellow (NIO)
Michael Graham (NIHE)

1. Introduction

1.1 Dr Stuart (Chair) welcomed everyone to the fifteenth meeting of the Regional Steering Group.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2007

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2007 were agreed.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 *Media Campaign*

Following the tendering process the contract was awarded to Genesis advertising. Genesis will be working with the Information Sub-Group, the Government Advertising Unit and the Domestic Violence and Community Safety Units to design and deliver the campaign. The campaign will be multi-media including a TV ad, press advertisements, Ad-Shel advertisements, beer-mats and advertisements at sporting events. It was noted that the DV Unit had been able to carry forward £120k allocated for the campaign in 2007/08 but unspent due to the tendering process. It is hoped that the campaign will begin in July and run over the Summer months and also at other key times.

- 3.2 MAP queried the referral process for the MODV programme. As it is a Court Mandated programme MAP cannot make referrals to it. Some clarification would be welcomed before the new campaign starts as it will likely lead to an increased number of referrals which Map will find difficult to deal with. MAP added that their Anger Management Programme was accredited with C&G, but it was not an appropriate programme for perpetrators of DV. NIO advised that they were negotiating with "Respect" for the introduction of their helpline in NI. It was considered that this would provide a "next step" for any perpetrators wishing to address their behaviour. A website is also planned to support the campaign.
- 3.3 There was a brief discussion on the efficacy of perpetrator programmes and it was generally accepted that the mind-set of a perpetrator will not change over the course of one programme. A range of interventions, including sanctions, is required to change behaviour although the perpetrator mind-set will likely remain the same.
- 3.4 *Training Strategy*
The Chair introduced Charlene Curran who had been appointed as Training Co-ordinator. Charlene took up her post on 1 April and is based within the Domestic Violence Unit. Charlene will be working with the DV Unit and Training Sub-Group to deliver the Training Strategy.
- 3.4 The Training Sub-Group had agreed that Charlene should spend the first year carrying out an audit of existing training programmes and developing a set of standards against which the programmes can be measured. Charlene will provide reports on progress at RSG meetings.
- 4. 2008/09 Action Plan**
- 4.1 Following the planning workshops on 30 January and 12 March a draft Action Plan for 2008/09 has been developed and was now before RSG for approval. It was intended that the Action Plan will be placed before the first meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Group on 21 May for Ministerial endorsement. Members were asked to submit any comments within 10 days.
- 5. Update on work on Sub-Groups**
- 5.1 Law Sub-Group
The Law Sub-Group had prepared a paper identifying its priorities for the year ahead, including the introduction of Domestic Homicide Reviews, piloting a One-Stop-Shop, the roll-out of MARAC and piloting and Integrated Family Court.
- 5.2 The Chair advised members the Minister was very interested in domestic violence and was keen to invest funding in this area. There was therefore a window of opportunity to secure significant funding for domestic violence which the RSG should take advantage of and not lose. The roll-out of MARAC would be an ideal issue to put to the Minister but it would need to be done within the next few days. It was agreed to refer this to the DV & Law sub-group to consider which area of its work had priority and then a

submission would be put to the Minister seeking funding. Members will be advised of the outcome.

- 5.3 A draft model for the delivery of MARAC through a tendering process had been circulated. This model would be examined by the DV & Law sub-group, subject to its decision on which area of work to recommend should be submitted to the Minister for funding. The Chair cautioned that any one who might tender for the contract should not be involved in that stage of the DV & Law sub-group's discussions.
- 5.4 **Children and Young People Sub-Group**
The Group has developed a "mini" action plan identifying key actions for the Group over the next year, in particular: engaging with the Children's Commissioner to ensure that dv is addressed in her strategies etc; monitor the development of contact centres regionally to ensure that the need for appropriate high level support/supervision is stressed and to ensure the safeguarding of children and young people affected by domestic violence; review the range of guidelines used by the various agencies working with Children and Young People affected by domestic violence and consider the need for additional NI specific guidance to be developed; and to establish links with Children's Services Planning Domestic Violence Sub- Groups and Trust Domestic Violence Partnerships to (a) scope the service provision available across the region and (b) promote consistency in relation to work ongoing/planned re children and young people affected by domestic violence.
- 5.5 The Group was concerned with a number of issues including the roll-out of the Barnardo's Risk Assessment model which is not being used in the WHSSB area but will consider these further.
- 5.6 **Information Sub-Group**
The Group has undertaken to produce a NI version of the NHS Resource Manual for Health Professionals. Both CMO and CNO have agreed to this and the Group is setting up a small working group to take this forward. The Group is also undertaking a follow-up survey of employers in relation to workplace policies. The findings will be reported to RSG. The Group will also be meeting soon to consider the next phase of the media campaign.
- 6. Helpline Report October – December 2007 & SLA**
- 6.1 The Helpline has achieved a strike rate of 75% which is the level recommended by the THA. Overall there was a 2% increase in calls over the period. The number of male calls remains at 2% but this does represent a significant number of male callers.
- 6.2 The Service Level Agreement for the Helpline is now due for renegotiation. The funders will be meeting with WAFNI soon to discuss and agree a new SLA.

7.
 - a. **Collection and Management of Domestic Violence Data**
 - b. **Equality of Access report**
- 7.1 a. The final Deloitte report has been received and the Information Sub-Group will be considering how to take it forward.
- 7.2 b. The equality of access report was produced by WAFNI with funding from DHSSPS. The main issue highlighted in the report is the issue of “limited or no recourse to public funds”. It was pointed out the Home Office had established a fund to address this issue and a similar fund is required in NI. Otherwise the strain on local Women’s Aid Groups will continue to increase.
8. **Inter-Ministerial Group on Domestic & Sexual Violence**
- 8.1 The first meeting of the IMG will take place on 21 May 2008. 2 guest speakers will address the first meeting to put the issues into context – District Judge Marilyn Mornington, Chair of the Raising the Standards Group, will present to the IMG on domestic violence; and Dr Olive Buckley will present on sexual violence. Officials will bring Ministers up to date with developments on both issues. Ministers will then be asked to endorse the draft 2008/09 domestic violence action plan and the sexual violence strategy and action plan. The Group will meet twice each year and will help raise the profile of both issues and encourage engagement at official level.
9. **Away Day in June**
- 9.1 An away day will be held on 6 June to consider if the current structures are “fit for purpose”. All members of RSG, Sub-Groups and LDVP chairs will be invited to attend. An independent facilitator will be engaged to manage the day. The Chair encouraged as many members as possible to attend.
10. **Date of next meeting**
- 10.1 The next meeting will be arranged for October 2008
11. **Any Other Business**
- 11.1 NIO advised that consultation was underway on an anonymous registration scheme for voters who are victims of domestic violence. The intention is to allow persons to register to vote anonymously if their safety would be at risk (e.g. from abusive ex-partners) should their name and address be accessible on the full electoral register.