

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

**Tuesday 18 December 2008 at 10.00 a.m.**

**Conference Room, Millennium House, Great Victoria Street, Belfast**

**Present:** Maura Briscoe (DHSSPS) – Chair  
Maura Campbell (NIO)  
Mark Goodfellow (NIO)  
Michael Sweeney (DHSSPS)  
Sharon Harley (NIO)  
Caroline Holloway (NSPCC)  
Mervyn Bates (District Judge)  
Maxine McCutcheon (MAP)  
Annie Campbell (WAFNI)  
Chris Heatley (NICtS)  
Hugh Hammil (Probation Board for NI)  
Mairead Lavery (PPS)  
Laura McPolin (DFP)  
Martina McCafferty (WHSSB)  
Deirdre Webb (EHSSB)  
Pauline Leeson (CiNI)  
Joan McCrum (Victim Support) - attending for Susan Reid  
Charlene Curran (DV Unit)  
Paul Cassidy (DV Unit)

**Apologies:** Catherine Reilly (SEHSC Trust)  
Eileen Sung (OFMDFM)  
Liz Shaw (SHSSB)

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Regional Steering Group. Apologies were noted.

## **2. Minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2008**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2008 were agreed.

## **3. MARAC – Chief Inspector Barbara Gray, PSNI**

3.1 The Chair introduced Chief Inspector Barbara Gray, PSNI, who had asked to attend the RSG to speak to members about her experiences from the MARAC pilot.

3.2 Chief Inspector Gray advised that she chaired the MARAC pilot Steering Group in 2006 and had also addressed the RSG in 2006. The pilot started in 2006 and ran until 2007. The pilot identified some key issues and some difficulties. It was not foreseen that the Pilot Steering Group would continue meeting into 2008. Securing funding for the roll out is a key achievement. Momentum must be maintained to ensure that the roll out progresses otherwise the hard work and achievements of the pilot will be lost. The Pilot

Steering Group produced a draft MARAC manual which is based on Home Office guidance. Experience suggests that MARAC should meet twice each month.

3.3 Some of the lessons from the pilot included:

- clear lines of accountability are required;
- training is a key issue and must be consistent;
- record keeping is important and the MARAC manual includes a template to ensure consistent record keeping;
- there must be an information sharing protocol. One of the difficulties encountered in the pilot was getting the various agencies to sign up to sharing information.
- it is important to ensure that the right people attend the MARAC. They need to have sufficient autonomy and the ability to make decisions on behalf of their organisations. They need to have awareness of DV. A dedicated deputy is also valuable;

3.4 In response to questions the following additional points were made:

- MARACs will be established in each of the 8 PSNI Commands. PSNI are appointing 8 MARAC Administrators and 1 MARAC Co-ordinator;
- a MARAC target has been included in PfA for 2009. Therefore HSC Trusts are required to co-operate with the process;
- training will be considered by the Protection and Justice Sub-Group;
- an implementation plan is being prepared.

3.5 On behalf of RSG, the Chair thanked Chief Inspector Gray for her presentation and for the valuable work undertaken by the Pilot Steering Group.

#### 4. **Matters Arising**

##### 4.1 *Helpline Service Level Agreement*

The Group was advised that the SLA for the period 2008-2011 had been agreed and signed-off by the funding agencies and WAFNI.

The latest Helpline report had been circulated prior to the meeting for information. The main points from the report were:

- the strike rate has increased to 78%;
- the number of calls managed over the summer increased by 940 and there was an increase in referrals to refuge however this is a seasonal pattern and might also reflect the media campaign which ran over the summer months. Some callers (mostly women) had mentioned the media campaign;
- floating support is increasing slowly each quarter;
- there was a slight increase in the number of male callers.

NIHE advised that the evaluation report on the helpline had just been completed and had been passed to WAFNI. The report is generally positive and makes a few recommendations which will be followed up at future

meetings. NIO confirmed that Community Safety Unit would fund the Helpline's accreditation with THA.

#### 4.2 *Meeting with Relate NI*

A further meeting is being arranged for early in the New Year to discuss their perpetrator programme further. Members will be advised of the outcome.

### 5. **Update since last meeting**

The Group was provided with a brief update on progress on a number of issues since the last meeting:

#### 5.1 *Inter-Ministerial Group*

The meeting due on 5 November was postponed as Minister was unwell. Attempts are being made to have the meeting rescheduled for before the end of January 2009.

#### 5.2 *Meeting with LDVPs*

The DV Unit and Community Safety Unit and the co-Chairs of RSG met with the LDVPs on 12 December. 6-monthly meetings with the LDVPs is an action in the current action plan and will allow for an exchange of information between the RSG and the LDVPs. A few issues had arisen from the meeting:

- LDVPs would like to be represented on Sub-Groups. When membership of the new Prevention and Support sub-groups is being considered, the LDVPs will be asked to nominate members;
- LDVPs have been asked to submit copies of their action plans to RSG for information/consideration;
- The Southern HSC Trust proposed running a regional event next year showcasing examples of best practice in tackling domestic violence. The Trust is willing to co-host.

#### 5.3 *Raising the Standards Conference – Jersey, May 2009*

A "flyer" for the RTS Conference was distributed to members for information. The Conference Planning Group has decided to use a different format for this conference using a series of keynote speakers and a choice of workshops. Further details of the conference will be circulated as soon as possible. Anyone planning to attend was advised to make arrangements quickly. Those persons whose places were being funded by DHSSPS/NIO will be advised asap.

**Action Point: attendees to be advised of funding arrangements.**

#### 5.4 *Proposed 2009/10 Action Plan development workshops*

It is proposed that a similar process to last year will be followed with 2 workshops being arranged in January and March 2009 to develop the 2009/10 Action Plan. It is also proposed that the action plan should run for 18 months to tie in with the end of the strategy in September 2010. This was agreed.

**Action Point: DV Unit to make arrangements for workshops in January and March 2009.**

### 5.5 *Media Campaign*

The existing campaign targeting perpetrators ends in March 2009. Consideration now needs to be given to what form next year's campaign might take. The following points were made:

- there are still areas that have not been addressed and DV campaigns need to dovetail with other campaigns ie, children's charities;
- an evaluation is needed to form a basis for any decision to move forward. It's not clear that we have a sound basis on which to make further decisions.
- DV needs to be considered in a broader sense, ie how it effects other groups including the gay/lesbian communities, migrants and students etc. Careful thought needs to be given to any future DV campaign;
- Focus Groups might provide useful input to future campaigns.

**Action Point: a clear strategic direction for future campaigns is needed. The use of focus groups should be considered to help design future campaigns.**

### 5.6 *Performance Indicators*

Two strands of work are underway on this issue. There is a need to measure annual progress in relation to the action plans; and also to measure the success of the strategy as a whole.

A sample monitoring pro-forma has been produced to measure progress on objectives on the action plan and will be used to produce an end-of-year report on the action plan. Each agency/Department will be asked to complete the pro-forma on a quarterly basis for DVU/CSU to monitor progress. This will be particularly important for the IMG. LDVPs will be asked to incorporate similar information in their plans.

Work is underway on developing the PIs described in Annex 5 of the strategy which will help in assessing how successful the strategy has been. This information is crucial as it will help decide what will replace the current strategy when it ends in September 2010. It was suggested that some outcome indicators will be needed. These might include "service user experience", "access to services" and "safety". Also an increase in numbers of persons reporting dv or contacting the relevant agencies could be a measure of success. Changing attitudes to dv is an important issue as attitudes need to be changed in order to change behaviour.

The impact of dv on the family could be considered. Children Services Planning outcome indicators might be useful as they are regional and are included in PfA targets.

**Action Point: Further work to be done for next meeting on developing PIs for the Strategy.**

### 5.7 *Training Strategy*

A short training update has been circulated prior to the meeting. A copy is attached for information.

## 6. Update from Sub-Groups

### *Information Sub-Group*

This Group had not met recently, and under the re-structuring agreed at the June workshop has now been stood down.

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

This Group met on 10 December 2008. The Chair could not attend the RSG today to provide an update but the minutes of the meeting will be circulated to members in due course.

**Action Point: Minutes to be circulated.**

### *Protection and Justice Sub-Group*

The Sub-Group has been meeting regularly and progress has been made on a number of issues:

- a small Steering Group has been established to take MARAC forward. The Steering Group is drafting an implementation plan and will be making contact with all key organisations. Training needs are also being looked at.
- 42 Court Service staff have received induction training since April 2008.
- issues surrounding the granting of bail in dv cases in NI are being considered. This is a complex area and many factors need to be taken into account, including the right of parents to see children and the safety of the children.
- NIO is funding research into the effectiveness of perpetrator programmes. PBNI will commission this research.
- representatives from key agencies will be meeting soon to discuss setting up a pilot One-Stop-Shop.

**Action Point: MARAC Implementation plan to be circulated when available.**

### *New Sub-Groups*

As agreed at the restructuring workshop, 2 new sub-groups will be created: Prevention Sub-Group and Support Sub-Group.

**Action Point: The DV Unit will trawl RSG, Sub-Groups and LDVPs for members of the new Groups.**

## 7. Dates for meetings in 2009

7.1 The following dates were noted for meetings during 2009:

10 March 2009;  
9 June 2009  
8 September 2009  
8 December 2009

## 8. Any Other Business

8.1 Members were advised that two targets relating to domestic violence had been included in "Priorities for Action", one in relation to the establishment and running of LDVPs, and one regarding attendance of social services staff at MARAC.

- 8.2 NIO have provided £350k to Ballymena Women's Aid to refurbish the Naomi Centre.
- 8.3 Members were advised that changes to the law surrounding sexual offences will be introduced in the February 2009.
- 8.4 Alyson Kilpatrick from the NI Policing Board was introduced to members. She is undertaking a thematic review of domestic violence on behalf of the Policing Board and wanted to make contact with some of the key agencies involved in the issue. The ToR of her review include looking at the policing of DV in terms of arrests and prosecutions, and also looking at the criminal justice system to identify any problems in that area. Members are happy to help Alyson with her work. Alyson agreed to update the Group at the meeting in March 2009.
- Action Point: Alyson Kilpatrick to be invited to RSG meeting on 10 March 2009.**