

Minutes of the Nineteenth Meeting of the Regional Steering Group on Domestic Violence

Wednesday 9th September 2009 at 10.00 a.m.

Conference Room, Millennium House, Great Victoria Street, Belfast

Present: Dr Maura Briscoe (DHSSPS) – Chair
Declan McGeown (NIO)
Sharon Harley (NIO)
Marian McIlhone (DHSSPS)
Colin Ramsey (DHSSPS)
Eilish O’Neill (DSD)
Michael Graham (NIHE)
Joan McCrum (Victim Support)
Caroline Holloway (NSPCC)
Liz Shaw (RHSCB)
Pauline Leeson (CiNI)
Chris Heatley (NICtS)
Martina McCafferty (RHSCB)
Annie Campbell (WAFNI)
Judge Mervyn Bates (District Judge)
Mairead Lavery (PPS)
Pauline Mooney (PSNI)
Maxine McCutcheon (MAP)
Eileen Sung (OFMDFM)

Apologies: Mark Goodfellow (NIO)
Laura McPolin (DFP)
Charlene Curran (DV Training Co-ordinator)
Peter O’Brien (The Law Society)
Susan Reid (Victim Support)
Mirjam Bader (COSO)
Catherine Reilly (UCHT)

Introduction

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the 19th meeting of the Regional Steering Group. Introductions were made and apologies were noted.

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2009

2. The minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2009 were agreed.

Matters Arising

3. The Chair advised members that the 2009/2010 Domestic Violence Action Plan would be published within the next 2 weeks and would be announced by way of a joint Ministerial press release.

It was agreed that other matters arising would be incorporated within the main agenda.

No Recourse to Public Funds

4. Members received an overview and update on the latest position regarding victims of domestic violence who are in the country on spousal visas and who, because of their status, have no recourse to public funding. Northern Ireland is represented on a National Steering Group led by the Home Office. The Home Office has secured a pot of funding which will allow organisations offering refuge accommodation to these victims to receive some monetary support. The National Working Group is considering how best this can be delivered across the United Kingdom. It is hoped that a way forward will be agreed in the near future.

Action Point 1: Sharon Harley to up-date RSG on Lack of Recourse to Public Funds at next meeting.

Rollout locally of Workplace Policies

5. Members were given a brief resume of how this action has been progressed to date. Members then discussed how further roll out could be achieved with some concern expressed as to whether or not employers would have sufficient services in place to implement a Workplace Policy.

Action Point 2: D & SV Unit, DHSSPS will consider how best to take forward the rollout of Workplace Policies and report developments back at next meeting.

2009/10 Action Plan

6. In general it was felt that the 2009/2010 Domestic Violence Action Plan puts forward a lot of initiatives but that a balance would need to be struck between actions and levels of resourcing available to carry these through. While there was concern that the Action Plan had been signed off and was now effectively six months into its lifecycle, it was agreed that a workshop should be convened to provide a mid year evaluation and stock take which could flag actions which would only be partially achieved due to resourcing limitations and allow prioritising accordingly.

Action Point 3: D & SV Unit, DHSSPS to facilitate a workshop to undertake mid year stock take of 2009/2010 Domestic Violence Action Plan.

Children and Young People Sub-Group

7. Liz Shaw, Chair of the Children and Young People Sub-Group, advised that consideration would need to be given to the future remit of the Sub-Group and in particular there would need to be discussion as to where it fits with Children's Service Planning who were a statutory agency. Discussion continued around the respective remits and

frequency of meetings of all of the sub- groups; and of the overarching Regional Strategy Group on Domestic Violence. It was noted that it was disappointing that aside from the Children and Young People and the Protection and Justice Sub-Groups that the others sub groups had not met.

8. It was agreed that Liz Shaw would arrange a meeting with Fionnuala McAndrew, Director HSCB and Children's' Service Planning to agree a way forward. It was further agreed that the D & SV Unit (DHSSPS) would seek additional nominations for the Prevention and Support Sub-Groups and arrange meetings thereafter.

Action Point 4: Liz Shaw to arrange meeting with Fionnuala McAndrew, Director, HSCB and Children's' Service Planning to determine future direction of the Children and Young People Sub-Group.

Action Point 5: D & SV Unit (DHSSPS) to seek additional nominations for the Support and Prevention Sub-Groups of the Regional Strategy Group on Domestic Violence and convene initial meetings of both groups.

Programmes for Perpetrators

9. Under the Protection and Justice strand of action plan the "Health Trusts and PBNi are to work together to ensure availability of a full range of perpetrator programmes (both criminal court and non-court mandated across Northern Ireland which are standardised, quality assured and with built in support for victims family members and significant others". The DV Protection and Justice Sub Group established a working group to consider this. At its inaugural meeting the group considered that as a starting point research should be commissioned to identify what programmes already exist. The group were also aware that money, which had originally been set aside to roll out a Non Violent Relationship Programme (NVRP) in the Belfast Area, had not been used. The Chair of the Protection and Justice Sub Group subsequently wrote to the Co Chairs of RSG requesting that some of this money be reallocated for research purposes. In principle this was agreed, however given the distinct parallels between domestic and sexual violence it was agreed that research should be expanded to include perpetrator programmes across both areas. This will impact on the membership of the working group.

Action Point 6: The working group under the auspices of the P&J Sub Group will look to further enhance membership to include sexual violence.

Performance Indicators

10. A short paper was tabled for discussion which had been produced by Cecilia Whitehorn who was engaged on a consultancy basis to develop an effective performance/management system. The paper was produced to measure the key actions agreed in the yearly action plans and ultimately the five year Tackling Violence at Home Strategy. Members were asked to consider the proposed Performance Indicator Audit Framework and provide feedback as appropriate to Colin Ramsey, DHSSPS by 30/10/09.

Action Point7: Members to consider the Performance Indicator Audit Framework and provide feedback to Colin Ramsey at colin.ramsey@dhsspsni.gov.uk by 30/10/09.

11. Discussion continued and members agreed that while comments would be appropriate in the first instance there would be merit in forming a small working group to consider performance indicators and evaluation in more detail. Nominations were sought and Liz Shaw, Eileen Sung, Caroline Holloway, Martina McCafferty and Annie Campbell put themselves forward. It was agreed that D & SV Unit (DHSSPS) would facilitate an inaugural meeting as soon as practicable.

Action Point 8: D & SV Unit (DHSSPS) to arrange working group to consider performance indicators and evaluation of action plans and strategy.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

12. Members were presented with an update on MARAC. Work was ongoing and on target for roll out to commence in Autumn 2009 and significant progress had been made in recent months as summarised below:-
 - NIO, DHSSPS and PSNI have agreed a funding package for MARAC for the period 1 April 2009 until 31 March 2011. This has been outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding to be signed by the funding partners;
 - Following detailed research the optimum model for MARAC in Northern Ireland has been agreed by the MARAC Project Management Group. The model agreed takes into account the available resources, lessons from the Antrim area pilot and best practice from other jurisdictions. The agreed model will incorporate 1 full time MARAC coordinator, 8 full time administrators and 8 part time (20 hours per week) Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs);
 - Arrangements for the appointment of administrators are at an advanced stage and it is anticipated that individuals will be in post within the next few months;
 - A suitable organisation has been identified to deliver training and to provide quality assurance of MARACs; Details of the

training programme are at an advanced stage with a view to training delivery commencing on 6 October 2009;

- As the agreed MARAC model now includes the IDVA role, negotiations are ongoing with potential providers of this service; and
- Work is currently ongoing to arrange a Ministerial launch event. It is anticipated that Ministers McGimpsey (DHSSPS), Goggins (NIO) and Assistant Chief Constable McCausland (PSNI) will speak at the event.

13. Members discussed the introduction of MARAC. There was concern from the Western Health and Social Care Trust about the training element and the effect on resourcing. It was felt that MARAC was being thrust upon them very quickly and there was a concern that some professionals were unaware of the model. It was felt that the timescale for commenting on the Caada toolkits was exceptionally tight. It was also felt that Local Domestic Violence Partnership (LDVP) should be more involved in the process and that they had up to now been receiving information retrospectively. It was therefore agreed that the D & SV Unit (DHSSPS) and Community Safety Unit (NIO) would write out again to the Chief Executives of the Health and Social Care Trusts and Local Domestic Violence Partnership (LDVP) Chairs to provide an update and offer a bit more time if necessary to respond to the consultation.

14. There were similar concerns within the Southern Health and Social Care Trust in that there was confusion as to who should be nominated for training and it was pointed out that it was difficult to offer feedback on the toolkit with little information on the MARAC.

Action Point 9: D & SV Unit (DHSSPS)/Community Safety Unit (NIO) to reconsider previous correspondence and write again to Chief Executives of the Health and Social Care Trusts and LDVP Chairs offering an update on MARAC and allowing more time to respond to the toolkits as necessary.

15. There followed discussion on the role of LDVP Chairs in the MARAC process and it was indicated that plans were in place to engage with LDVP Chairs.

Action Point 10: D & SV Unit (DHSSPS) /Community Safety Unit (NIO) to invite LDVP Chairs to a meeting about MARAC.

Any Other Business

Relate NI

16. Members were advised that Relate NI had written to Minister McGimpsey, DHSSPS to request a meeting to discuss their Family Violence and Abuse Programme. Members were aware of presentation of the model at a previous RSG meeting. Members

discussed at length their views on couple counselling within domestic violence and it was agreed that the upcoming research into perpetrator programmes would provide an ideal platform to allow for a fuller assessment of the Relate NI programme along with all existing perpetrator programmes. It was agreed that Caroline Holloway would write to Relate NI to advise of proposed research into programmes for perpetrators.

Action Point 11: Caroline Holloway to write Relate NI to advise about proposed research into perpetrator programmes.

17. Discussion moved to risk assessments. Members revisited the Barnardo's Risk Assessment Model which Maddie Bell had presented at the last RSG meeting in March.
18. Members were advised that the D & SV Unit (DHSSPS) had met with Fionnuala McAndrew, Director, HSCB and raised the issue of Risk Assessments and that a response was awaited. It was agreed that this area would be revisited and the Chair asked Liz Shaw if she would pick this issue up with Fionnuala.

Action Point 12: Liz Shaw to contact Fionnuala McAndrew, Director, HSCB to follow up response on Risk Assessments.

Training In Schools and FE Establishments

19. The Chair advised that the D & SV Unit (DHSSPS) would be meeting with colleagues in the Department of Education to have preliminary discussions around introducing domestic and sexual violence training into the curriculum. It was proposed to start with schools and leave Further Education colleges for the time being.

Action Point 13: D & SV Unit, DHSSPS to arrange meeting with colleagues in Department of Education regarding the introduction of domestic and sexual violence training into the curriculum.

Domestic Violence Strategy Post September 2010

20. Members were asked to consider the direction post September 2010 beyond the life of the current strategy. The Chair advised that Government partners planned to meet shortly to consider the current structures and that thought would be given to an integrated strategy incorporating domestic and sexual violence. Some members voiced concern that a joint strategy may result in the domestic violence element being diluted and after discussion it was proposed that it would be useful to look at integrated domestic and sexual violence strategies that had been adopted elsewhere in GB. Eileen Sung advised that OFMDFM would be supportive of this approach and it was agreed in the first instance that the Chair would discuss the way forward at official level.

Routine Enquiry for Victims of Domestic Violence

21. The Group was provided with a brief update on the Routine Enquiry for Victims of Domestic Violence attending pre and post natal appointments. A questionnaire had been sent out to the Nursing Group and meetings had taken place with those responsible for information management however systems were not robust in capturing the necessary data. Work was ongoing and it was felt that GP's may be best placed in the future to record incidences. Consideration would be given to moving this area of work forward within the remit of the Information Sub-group and it was agreed to raise the subject of data collection with the Chair of the Information Sub-Group, Catherine Reilly.

Action Point 14: D & SV Unit, DHSSPS to discuss data collection within the Routine Enquiry for Victims of Domestic Violence with Catherine Reilly with a view to progressing work as part of the Information Sub-group.

Policing Board Thematic Inquiry

22. Members were advised that the Policing Board Thematic Review had been published in March. While PSNI will be taking due account of the report the P&J Sub Group from a cross agency perspective. Members wishing to access the report can do so at: -
<http://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/index/publications/human-rights-publications.htm>

Date of Next Meeting

23. The date of the next meeting will be set for the second or third week of December once members' availability has been clarified. It was agreed that dates for meetings throughout 2010 should be agreed in advance at the next meeting.

SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS

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