

Domestic Violence Project Update

Decisions

The Board is asked to give its views on:

- 1. Whether the evaluation of the project's work with local partnerships and the introduction of the new BVPI would provide a suitable focus for a one-day LGA conference in June 2005 (4.2).*
- 2. Whether they agree with the proposals in 6.2 to take forward policy work on children and domestic violence and to comment on future reporting arrangements for work on children and domestic violence (6.4).*
- 3. Should the project promote domestic violence employment policies and should the LGA be asked to consider the feasibility of adopting its own policy (7.2)?*
- 4. How best to respond to concerns over the resourcing of domestic violence strategies and the need for main-stream funding (8.3).*

Action

- 5. Officers to undertake any action as determined by the Board.*

Action by: *Kate Mulley, Education and Social Policy*

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Domestic Violence Project Update

1. Background

- 1.1 *This three-year project aims to identify and promote good practice of councils and partner organisations in addressing domestic violence. It started in December 2003 and is funded by the Home Office. Project monitoring arrangements with the Home Office include quarterly updates and an annual review scheduled for 15 December 2004.*

2. Partnership support

- 2.1 *A key project objective is to support the development of local domestic violence partnerships. Locally, partnerships are at very different levels of development with many in the process producing their strategies and actions plans. Last year, funding was made available through the Home Office crime reduction programme for a number of new domestic violence co-ordinator posts. This coupled with the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Bill, has served to push the issue up both central and local government agendas. With so much having already been achieved there is a need to share that knowledge and build on what works at a practical, local level.*
- 2.2 *The project has developed a programme of direct engagement and support, led by the project consultant Anthony Wills. Anthony, a former Borough Commander in the Metropolitan Police and a trustee of the 'Standing Together Against Domestic Violence' in Hammersmith and Fulham, is leading a programme of work with 10 developing domestic violence partnerships. The programme is using the skills of the consultant to guide, advise and support partnerships. It has the twin aims of assisting the development of effective partnerships in the chosen areas and informing the development of the LGA's project.*
- 2.3 *Good practice criteria have been developed drawn from existing partnership work and guidance. Partnership selection took place according to published criteria and the first round of visits has been completed, contextual questions answered and advice prepared. The engagement with these partnerships will continue throughout the financial year – after which the lessons learnt will be published.*

3. Targets, performance measures and funding

- 3.1 *A range of performance measures and targets are being developed to encourage the mainstreaming/prioritisation of work to tackle domestic violence. The LGA has sought to influence this process to ensure that targets are workable and will achieve their intended aims, and that members receive information and guidance.*
- 3.2 *In the first round of Local Public Service Agreements (LPSA) a number of councils adopted domestic violence targets. In July, we produced a publication sharing council's experiences, outlining the key benefits and difficulties in the first round and setting out the considerations local authorities will need to take into account when deciding whether to set domestic violence stretch targets for second generation of LPSAs.*

- 3.3 *The ODPM consultation on new and revised Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI) included a significantly revised indicator for domestic violence, with a basket of 12 targets. In our response, we welcomed the broader purpose of the revised indicator, but also expressed concerns about the scope of the indicator (especially the omission of county councils) and the lack of reference to support/outreach services for children and adults. Given the range of excellent information and comments provided by members during discussions on the draft indicator, we are looking to see how we can use this material constructively for the benefit of all local authorities once the final indicators have been published. One possibility would be to produce a practical guide including a range of good practice examples from local authorities.*
- 3.4 *The LGA is also in discussion with the Audit Commission on the revision of the community safety Key Line of Enquiry arguing that this should include domestic violence. The Home Office has now agreed a set of eight indicators to measure national performance.*

4. Domestic Violence Conference

- 4.1 *The publication of the evaluation of the work with local partnerships and the introduction of a broader BVPI (and possible guidance) might provide a suitable focus for a one-day LGA conference in June 2005.*
- 4.2 *The Board is asked to give its views as to whether this would provide a suitable focus for a one-day LGA conference.*

5. Sharing good practice and raising awareness

- 5.1 *Sharing information and raising awareness is also a key objective. The project has:*
- *developed an enhanced project page and resources on LGA Net*
 - *produced a good practice leaflet on partnership working, the first of a series. Other possible topics to include: children's services (drafted), data projects, housing solutions, perpetrator programmes, criminal justice responses and specialist courts, health, etc.*
 - *published a bi-monthly domestic violence information bulletin*
 - *input into Home Office virtual helpdesk and other enquiries*
 - *lobbying on the Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Bill*
 - *press releases and articles, including coverage in national press, and events*
- 5.2 *We are also working with the IDeA to produce a domestic violence resource on IDeA Knowledge, within a revised community safety section. The resource will service as a repository for the good practice examples and case materials identified by the project.*

6. Children and domestic violence

- 6.1 *Given the current restructuring of children's services and the links between domestic violence and child abuse; developing policy work in this area has been a focus in the first year of the project. Briefings were produced for the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Bill and Children Bill (with corresponding media work).*
- 6.2 *To take this forward we are:*
- *producing a good practice leaflet showing how four council's have developed joined-up approaches to working with children and adults*
 - *working with the voluntary sector to gather information about current practice*

- *looking to see whether we can produce a joint statement with the ADSS on the introduction of Clause 120 of the Adoption and Children Act (2002) which extends the definition of harm to include witnessing violence and abuse*
- *setting up a key stakeholders meeting (statutory and voluntary) to agree future action.*

6.3 *Before the new Board structures were in place, policy on children and domestic violence was agreed by both the Community Safety Panel (and Social Inclusion Executive) and the Social Affairs and Health Executive.*

6.4 *The Board's views are sought on proposals to take forward future policy work on children and domestic violence and on future reporting arrangements.*

7. Employment policies

7.1 *The DTI's 'Cost of domestic violence research' estimates that lost economic output due to domestic violence accounts for around £2.7 billion a year (cost of time off work due to injuries). A number of local authorities have adopted domestic violence employment policies, outlining the legal context, raising awareness and improving responses. These policies are useful as not only do they assist individual employees, they also convey an important public message.*

7.2 *Although we have collated information about various policies and key features, this work really falls under the remit of the Employer's Organisation (EO). The EO are keen to run an article on this issue but have limited capacity to do more. Should the LGA promote the use of such policies? Should the LGA consider adopting its own policy?*

7.3 *The Board's views are sought.*

8. Forward planning and funding

8.1 *The project is represented on: the DCA Domestic Violence Advisory Group, CPS Domestic Violence Project External Reference Group, National Witness Mobility Steering Group, Project Umbra and the All Party Parliamentary Group on Domestic Violence. The project contribute to: CPS domestic violence policy, CDRP guidance on tackling domestic violence, domestic homicide review guidance, housing code of guidance, Supporting People domestic violence guidance, and protocols for children's services including the Common Assessment Framework.*

8.2 *A major issue for the coming year will be the resourcing of actions/priorities agreed by domestic violence partnerships. Patchy and unstable funding arrangements have already been highlighted as the major problem in a consultation with advisers and in the preliminary findings from Anthony Will's programme of work. Successful local initiatives are often underpinned by mainstream funding from statutory partners, while projects funded by one-off grants can be unsustainable. If the new BVPI (including targets on the employment of coordinators etc) is approved this is likely to increase the pressure on local authorities. The LGA will need to promote a consistent response.*

8.3 *The Board's views are sought.*

9. Project finances

9.1 *The project will receive £300,000 from the Home office over its three year duration, the majority of which is spent on LGA staff costs and overheads including a dedicated project*

leader as well as a percentage of the time of the project sponsor, admin support and contributions from the media, information and research teams. The second largest item is the fees of the consultant and expenses resulting from the programme of engagement and support with local partnerships. A further area of expenditure is publications.

9.2 *To date project finances are on track with £22,392 balance/carry forward expected at the end of December 2004. However, we are about to commission research to evaluate the programme of support and engagement. The current projected balance at the end of the project (not taking into account planned expenditure on research or publications) is projected as £67,363.*

9.3 *The Board's views will be sought on future expenditure once initial findings from the programme of engagement and support are available in spring 2005.*

Implications for Wales

The project applies to England and Wales.

Financial/ Resource Implications

This is a three-year Home Office funded project; see 9 for information on project finances.

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