

24 January 2005

Domestic Violence Project Update

Decisions

The Board is asked to give its views on:

1. The continuation of the project's consultancy work with selected local partnerships into a second, year-long programme of shorter more focused interventions with a greater number of partnerships. This would be based on the lessons learnt from year one and would be funded from within the existing project budget (7);
2. Future reporting arrangements for work on children and domestic violence. Specifically, should policy on children and domestic violence continue to be signed off by both the Children's and the Safer Communities Boards (16); and
3. Whether the project should promote the adoption of domestic violence employment policies by local authorities, and, if the LGA should be asked to consider the feasibility of adopting its own policy (19)?

Action Required

4. Action to be undertaken as determined by the Board.

Action by: Kate Mulley, Education and Social Policy

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Domestic Violence Project Update

Background

- 1 The LGA's three-year domestic violence project is beginning its second year. The Board is asked to note the work of the project during its first year and give its views on future developments. Anthony Wills, the project consultant will give a presentation on the project's work with local partnerships. The project is funded by the Home Office, its annual review having taken place on 15 December 2004.
- 2 This three-year project aims to identify and promote good practice of councils and partner organisations in addressing and reducing domestic violence. Starting in December 2003, the project is funded by the Home Office. Project monitoring arrangements include quarterly updates and annual reviews with the Home Office. The first annual review took place on 15 December 2004 and the proposals in this report reflect discussions at that meeting.

Partnership support

- 3 A key project objective is to support the development of domestic violence partnerships. Locally, partnerships are at very different levels of development with many in the process producing their strategies and 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 Act, 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 to tackle domestic violence and reduce repeat offences.
- 4 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 has the twin aims of assisting the development of effective partnerships in the chosen areas and informing the development of the project.
- 5 In the first phase of the programme lead officers were contacted, contextual questions addressed and initial visits arranged with each of the partnerships. Using the information gathered from this process, the consultant prepared advice – and proposals for future engagement were agreed. We are now in the process of returning to partnerships to work through these proposals. The key areas of activity are in the areas of strategic development, chief officer support/engagement and the provision of services. Policing is

a key element of any partnerships but these organisations have been more difficult to support in the change towards a modified focus. A major aspect of the work has been the facilitation of events which allow partners to decide their own strategy and actions with the benefit of independent advice and experience. The context of all partnerships has been a crucial part of helping develop the effectiveness of multi-agency work.

6 In terms of interim findings, there has been a large degree of similarity between the issues faced and the problems raised in the individual partnerships. Below is a summary of some of the key challenges, and, although they do not all apply to all of the partnerships, they do represent consistent trends:

- lack of corporate support at chief officer level and crucial partners missing;
- activity is led by the availability of funding which hampers a more strategic approach;
- strategies fail to focus on a limited number of achievable objectives;
- the absence of mainstream funding leads to insecurity and lack of corporate buy-in;
- outreach/advocacy services are fragile and under-funded;
- data collection is patchy;
- initial policing action remains old-fashioned and traditional;
- the voluntary sector is sidelined; and
- co-ordinators are often isolated within the community safety system and can, on occasions, be unable to develop their performance without effective managerial support.

Most of the partnerships we are working with are at a relatively early stage of development and so face common problems. However, even when this is taken into account and despite all the problems with funding and support it is clear that in all of these areas the position of victims is becoming safer. A summary of the support provided in each of the partnership areas is **attached** as Appendix 1 to this report.

7 We would like to build on the lessons learnt to extend the consultancy for a further year. Dissemination of the findings from year one will include a publication produced by an independent researcher with a self-assessment tool for developing partnerships. A second, year-long programme of consultancy will aim to make shorter, more focused interventions available to a greater number of partnerships. This would be based on a two-phased intervention: assessment of what's there and action planning. We would require more senior buy-in from the outset. This programme would run from the autumn of 2005, exact details to be agreed once findings from the initial programme are available for analysis. This second phase of the programme will be funded from the existing project budget.

Targets, performance measures and funding

- 8 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.
- 9 In the first round of Local Public Service Agreements (LPSAs) 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 LPSAs. We have also argued successfully for domestic violence to be included as an example within the revised Community Safety Key Lines of Enquiry.
- 10 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 concern about its scope 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.

Domestic Violence Conference

- 11 The evaluation of the work with local partnerships and the introduction of the revised BVPI will provide the focus for a one-day LGA conference in June 2005.

Sharing good practice and raising awareness

- 12 Sharing information and raising awareness is also a key objective. The project has: developed an enhanced project page and resources on LGA Net; produced leaflets on partnership working and children's services (as part of a series); published a bi-monthly domestic violence information bulletin; provided input to Home Office virtual helpdesk and other enquiries; lobbied on the Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Bill; produced press releases and articles, including coverage in national press; and, events.
- 13 We are also working with the Improvement and Development Agency (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.

Children and domestic violence

- 14 Given the current restructuring of children's services and the links between domestic violence and child abuse; developing policy work in this area is a priority. Briefings were produced for the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Bill and Children Bill (with corresponding media work). We have recently published a pamphlet outlining the LGA's position and showing how four councils have developed joined-up approaches to working with children and adults. We are working to see if we can produce a joint statement with the Association of Directors of Social services (ADSS) and Child and Family Court Advisory Service (CAFCASS) 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.
- 15 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. The latest pamphlet on children and domestic violence was signed off by lead members on both the Children and Young People Board and Safer Communities Board.
- 16 *The Board's views are sought on future reporting arrangements for work relating to children and domestic violence.*

Employment policies

- 17 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.
- 18 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?
- 19 *The Board's views are sought.*

Forward planning and funding

- 20 The project is represented on: the Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA) Domestic Violence Advisory Group, Crown Prosecution Service (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, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (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.

- 21 A major issue for the coming year will be the resourcing of actions/priorities agreed by domestic violence partnerships. Patchy and unstable funding arrangements are the major problem in securing an effective multi-agency response to domestic violence. Successful local initiatives are often underpinned by mainstream funding from statutory partners, while projects funded by one-off grants can be unsustainable. The LGA needs to promote a consistent response and to lobby for greater member commitment. A major problem which has been highlighted in our work with local partnerships is the lack of priority given to domestic violence by member authorities. To address this, the LGA will need to lobby to raise the profile and commitment given to domestic violence by local authorities, encouraging lead members to champion this issue within their authority.
- 22 Appendix 2 **attached** provides an outline of key dates for 2005.

Project finances

- 23 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.
- 24 To date project finances are on track with £22,392 balance/carry forward 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) is £67,363. The majority of this will be allocated to the second phase of the programme of engagement and support with local partnerships – further detail to be provided once findings from the first phase of the programme are available.

Implications for Wales

- 25 The project applies to England and Wales.

Financial/Resource Implications

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

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Developing Effective Domestic Violence Partnerships **Summary of support for the 10 selected partnerships**

Introduction

Following the selection process all 10 partnerships received one day of initial consultancy and a subsequent report suggesting developmental needs. Surrey is the only exception to this – see below. As has been reported separately a number of common factors were evident in these visits and all were in a good position to improve their performance in the area of domestic violence. A key element of this work has been the intention of enhancing the role and leadership of local authorities in domestic violence partnerships.

The following are brief details of the current position in the 10 areas.

Chorley and South Ribble District Councils, Lancashire

The LGA intervention has come at a time when separate and independent work had been commissioned to develop a strategy. The LGA report has allowed them to focus on a more achievable approach. A subsequent visit produced a plan for a two day objective setting programme (facilitated by the LGA) including a commitment to devising an action plan. It has been agreed that senior champions will lead and support this event.

Cornwall and Isles of Scilly County Council

There is a complex community safety meeting structure in this region which is exacerbated by geography and the two-tier structure. There is chief executive led support but the initial report required some local analysis of the issues and provision. Once this has been completed a further and longer visit will take place to produce the strategy and commitment from partners.

Cannock Chase District Council

This is an effectively led authority and their development reflects senior support from within the Council. The partnership has achieved a good foundation of performance which they are seeking to develop. The initial report has now been built upon and a series of focussed and achievable priorities agreed. They have also been able to use the consultancy to facilitate a domestic violence conference where various workshops were facilitated to progress the growth of related partnerships.

Watford and Three Rivers Domestic Violence Forum.

This partnership is based around three districts in Hertfordshire. Access to specific funding has meant that the pace of development in certain areas has outstripped the engagement of the partners. There is also a lack of commitment from one of the Districts. Following a meeting with the Mayor of Watford a new approach to involvement and development has been agreed which will be facilitated by this consultancy.

North Tyneside Borough Council

Partially hampered by being small and adjacent to wealthier and better-funded partnerships North Tyneside is striving hard to develop its role. A failed bid led to some loss of momentum but much work has seen them reinvigorated. A successful publicity event allowed various senior figures to be canvassed for support, and successfully so. A two day event is now timetabled to agree a strategy and action plan for the future.

Surrey County Council

Surrey sought very early assistance to help with a LPSA bid. This led on to the direct consultancy. The issue for the County is what role they should play in securing and delivering an enhanced approach to domestic violence. The “light touch” they propose will probably not achieve the level of performance necessary to be successful in the LPSA targets. Meetings and planning sessions with the key partners will finally resolve this dilemma. These will follow an independent review of outreach services (within the LGA consultancy remit) as an essential factor in realising their intended outcomes.

Shropshire

A slow start has now seen some momentum gained. The support of the Chief Executive has been agreed and a series of sessions are planned to decide the way ahead around tight, focussed and achievable objectives based on the original report.

Carmarthenshire County Council

A lack of senior support has tended to reduce the opportunities for development in this area. Working in relative isolation, the co-ordinator has mounted effective awareness and training campaigns. A subsequent visit has established the priorities for the partnership which will be the basis of their future activities.

Enfield Borough Council

This is another area where the funding for a co-ordinator has not seen a corresponding growth in support for domestic violence work. Both the Borough Commander and the partnership have been addressed on the issues. The former has expressed and demonstrated support but the Forum lacks a sense of urgency. Efforts will continue to be made to support the co-ordinator and drive development forward.

Barnsley Borough Council

There is considerable support for developing effective domestic violence partnerships in Barnsley. There is considerable support at Chief Officer level but progress has been hampered by the long term sickness of the co-ordinator. Negotiations are now under way to move matters on with the Head of Community Safety in the continuing absence of the co-ordinator.

Key dates for 2005

Date	Activity
January	LGA children and domestic violence good practice pamphlet Domestic Violence Advisers Meeting Domestic violence information bulletin
February	Joint LGA/ADSS/CAFCASS statement on change to the definition of harm Article in First magazine – raising commitment/profile of local authorities work
March	Provisional – Quarterly review with Home Office Domestic violence information bulletin
April	LGA publication on revised Best value Performance Indicator Completion of initial programme of support to local partnerships
May	Final report on programme of support to local partnerships, including self-assessment tool (independent research) Publish good practice pamphlet Domestic violence information bulletin
June	LGA one-day domestic violence conference: findings from first phase of consultancy and new BVPI Provisional – quarterly review with Home Office
July	Agree and pilot second phase of consultancy. LGA national conference Domestic violence advisors meeting Domestic violence information bulletin
August	Publish good practice pamphlet
September	Start of second phase of consultancy – to run for a year LGA residential Community Safety Conference Provisional – quarterly review with Home Office Domestic violence information bulletin
October	
November	Publish good practice pamphlet Domestic violence information bulletin
December	Provisional – annual review with Home Office

