

# ***A Hidden Truth....?***

## **A Scrutiny Report about Domestic Abuse in County Durham**



**Scrutiny Sub-Committee for Strong, Healthy and Safe Communities**

**21 May 2007**



Making a difference where you live

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## Section One - Foreword



Domestic violence is one of the great taboos of our age. We know it exists, but it is a hidden truth, and there is, even today, a reluctance on the part of many of those who are the victims of abuse to come forward and seek help.

Domestic violence is more than physical abuse - it is often emotional, causing as much pain as the visible marks of bruises and scars. It can be devastating to be abused by someone that you love and think loves you in return.

Whilst the majority of people today, thankfully, find such violence abhorrent, there are still some perpetrators of domestic abuse who believe they can justify the violence they employ against their partners, be it physical or emotional. But nothing can be sufficient justification for behaving in this way.

We have not forgotten, during this project, that domestic violence occurs against men in heterosexual relationships, between those in same sex relationships and between those in the black and minority ethnic community. We have attempted to deal with these aspects of abuse in our report, but the data and understanding in relation to these areas is extremely limited and we believe merits greater attention.

In undertaking the project, we particularly considered the impact that domestic abuse has on children and the emerging data about this aspect of abuse. We also looked at abuse against the elderly, another area that is increasingly recognised and growing in prominence.

I would like to thank all of the witnesses who willingly gave up their time to speak to us about the issues; to the members of the Working Group who were fully engaged in the process and to the officers who supported the work of the Group.

**Councillor Dorothy Bowman**  
Chair of the Working Group

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## **Section Two - Terms of Reference and Membership of the Working Group**

### **Terms of Reference**

2.1 The following terms of reference were adopted by the working group:

#### **Focus**

2.2 The working group reviewing “Domestic Violence” will take evidence from key witnesses involved directly and indirectly in providing services and support to those people in our local communities who are subject to domestic violence.

2.3 The focus of the working group will be primarily on:

- The support provided to those victims who seek to flee domestic violence
- The impact of domestic violence on families and particularly children
- Abuse of the elderly

2.4 The review will want to consider in particular:

- Whether value for money is being delivered
- The extent of domestic violence in County Durham (including domestic violence in the black and minority ethnic, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, communities and against men)
- Which agencies provide support services and how, where and when they are provided
- How earlier involvement of agencies can be achieved
- Whether closer working of partner agencies can be developed
- The arrangements in place for refuges/housing for those fleeing domestic violence
- What Policies and Strategies are in place to support the victims of domestic violence?
- What is the County Council’s specific role in supporting victims of domestic violence?
- How can perpetrators of domestic violence be more speedily and effectively dealt with?
- What work is underway to changes attitudes locally in relation to domestic violence?
- Best practice in the field of domestic violence nationally.

#### **Approach**

2.5 The working group will receive correspondence, organise visits, meet with relevant parties to ensure it has fully understood and received evidence on this matter before reaching its conclusions and making any recommendations for service improvements.

## **Reporting**

- 2.6 The working group will report in the first instance to the Strong, Healthy and Safe Communities Scrutiny Sub-Committee on its findings.
- 2.7 It will then report to Corporate Management Team and Cabinet with its recommendations, requesting Cabinet to respond to these recommendations via an action plan.

## **Timescale**

- 2.8 The Working Group will begin in September 2006 and conclude in February 2007.

## **Membership of the Working Group**

- 2.9 **The following Councillors were members of the working group:**

Joseph Armstrong  
Alan Barker  
Dorothy Bowman (Chair)  
Jean Chaplow  
Vernon Chapman  
Sonny Douthwaite  
Josephine Fergus  
George Gray  
Edna Hunter  
Sarah Iveson  
John Lethbridge  
Dennis Southwell  
Paul Stradling  
Paul Trippett  
Norman Wade  
Mac Williams  
Anne Wright

- 2.10 **The following were co-opted members of the working group:**

Mandy English (County Durham Primary Care Trust)  
Councillor Malcolm Iveson (Durham Association of Local Councils)  
Ken Ibbitson (Service Users and Carers)

- 2.11 **The following County Council officers supported the project:**

Tom Bolton (Senior Scrutiny Support Officer, Corporate Services)  
Ros Layfield (Committee Administrator, Corporate Services)  
Angela Sheen (Senior Community Safety Officer, Adult and Community Services)

## Section Three – Executive Summary

### Introduction

- 3.1 **Domestic violence (or domestic abuse) is commonplace, representing 25% of all violent crime and accounting for more repeat victims than for any other crime.** The term encompasses much more than violence by men against women (although that is by far the largest category, with 1 in 4 women experiencing some form of abuse). It also includes violence against partners in same sex and transgendered relationships, and violence by women against men (1 in 6 men is said to have been subjected to domestic violence). It can exhibit many different forms, i.e. in the BME community it may include issues such as forced marriage, or female genital mutilation (although in the case of the latter, because of the age of those on whom it is performed, it might be more properly classed as child abuse). In the broader sense, domestic violence also includes abuse against older vulnerable people (“elder abuse”), an area of abuse which is becoming more widely recognised. Domestic violence also impacts on young people and may constitute “significant harm” for which support is needed, or may involve young people themselves as perpetrators (i.e. where two 16-18 year olds are living together/married and power and control form part of the relationship).
- 3.2 **The cost of domestic violence in terms of police, courts, health service, local authority and voluntary sector time is massive – estimated at £23 billion per year nationally.** Domestic violence is the greatest cause of morbidity (sickness) amongst women aged 19-44, greater than cancer, war and motor vehicle accidents together. Domestic violence is also significantly under-reported.
- 3.3 Because of the varying nature of domestic violence and the many consequences, a wide range of agencies, both statutory and voluntary are involved in providing support to victims and ensuring that perpetrators are brought to justice. The Working Group took evidence from many of the key bodies involved in providing support and combating domestic violence. It found real commitment on the part of those working in this field to tackle the issues and improve the lot of those who are unlucky enough to become victims of domestic violence.

### Project Themes

- 3.4 A number of themes emerged as the project progressed:

- **Leadership by the County Council in relation to domestic violence**
- **Awareness about domestic violence issues amongst Councillors and Council staff and within other agencies, and in schools**
- **Recognition of domestic violence within same sex and transgendered relationships, in the BME community, against vulnerable adults, by some young adults, and upon men**
- **Lack of data about some aspects of domestic violence and the need for better analysis of data so as to target resources**
- **Better evaluation of the effectiveness of publicity campaigns and other measures to target domestic violence**
- **Promotion of better partnership working and the role and effectiveness of the County Council in partnerships**
- **The need for greater support for victims (and perpetrators)**

## **Recommendations**

3.5 The following recommendations are suggested by the Working Group (the detailed recommendations are set out in Section Eleven below):

### **3.6 Stronger Leadership**

- **Appointment by the Council of Officer and Member “Champions”**
- **Greater clarity around the role of existing officer arrangements linked to domestic violence**
- **Appointment of a Member Panel (similar to Corporate Parenting Panel) to deal with safeguarding adult issues.**

### **3.7 Greater Awareness**

- **Raised awareness amongst members about domestic violence issues via seminars/briefings (including LGBT and BME issues)**
- **Regular information for local members about domestic violence levels in their areas**
- **Review of training opportunities in relation to domestic violence for staff (including LGBT and BME issues as for members)**
- **Raising awareness in our local communities by use of “Countywide” an improved web presence and greater accessibility to policy and other related documents**
- **Development (subject to resources) of a domestic violence workplace policy for the County Council’s own staff**
- **A review of the take up and use of existing educational material and the inclusion of references to domestic violence in LGBT/BME communities and by young people aged 16-18 in relationships**
- **Reviewing of the effectiveness of any future publicity material and whether current material exists for minority groups.**

### 3.8 Better Data

- **Consideration (with partners) of current data quality and opportunities for analysis, including data about BME/LGBT, young people and heterosexual male victims**
- **Improved data capture and analysis of abuse against vulnerable adults**
- **Explore the possibility of identifying domestic violence related suicides (with partners)**
- **Research about incidence of domestic violence locally in LGBT and BME communities, and by women against men.**

### 3.9 Enhanced Partnership Working

- **A review of County Council involvement in existing partnerships with the aim of strengthening participation and bringing greater clarity and effectiveness**
- **Encouraging greater representation of “under-served” groups in partnerships**
- **Raising the profile of domestic violence in Local Area Agreements specifically in relation to victims.**
- **Supporting Refuge provision generally and particularly in Sedgefield**
- **Support for the development of any proposed specific refuge provision for victims from BME or LGBT communities, men fleeing violence from women and for victims with older male children**
- **Promoting development of multi-agency services provision along the lines of the Croydon Family Justice Centre.**

### 3.10 Support for Victims and Perpetrators

- **Review by County Council and encouragement of partner providers (health, domestic violence fora, local authorities etc.) of existing engagement mechanisms to promote greater stakeholder involvement in service development and evaluation**
- **Assess need for perpetrator programmes for LGBT perpetrators and women who are perpetrators against men**
- **Consider how support for victims such as “bought brides” who have no recourse to public funds, can be improved**
- **Consider the implications for County Council safeguarding children provision in the light of changed definition of “significant harm” to include “impairment of health or development caused by witnessing ill treatment of another”**
- **Ask County Durham Drugs and Alcohol Action Team Board to consider how the DAAT can better address the needs of both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence where alcohol and/or drugs are implicated.**

### Review

- 3.11 A key element of scrutiny is reviewing recommendations to determine whether (if accepted) they have made a difference.

**It is recommended that a review of the recommendations in this report be undertaken 6 months after their consideration by Cabinet.**

- 3.12 The conclusions which support the above recommendations are set out in full in Section Ten of the report below.

## **Section Four – Methodology**

### **Project Plan**

- 4.1 Initial scoping by the working group at meetings on 31 July and 4 September 2006 resulted in a Project Plan (see Appendix 1). This was designed to break down the project into manageable areas of focus for each meeting of the group and allow relevant witnesses to be invited to provide evidence as appropriate.

### **Evidence**

- 4.2 The majority of the evidence was provided at sessions of the working group in the form of presentations by expert witnesses, followed by question and answer sessions. Information was also provided to the group about issues raised at national and local conferences. Members also viewed a video, used (together with other supporting documentation) to provide information to young people in schools about domestic violence. Details of the evidence sessions are set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

### **Engagement and Consultation**

- 4.3 Engagement and consultation for this project took the form of:
- A visit to a Women's Refuge in Bishop Auckland and discussions with the staff and women residing there
  - A meeting with young people who had observed/experienced domestic violence within their households, in relationships with other young people and as carers themselves
  - Discussions with representatives from the LGBT and BME communities
  - Evidence provided by Felicity Shenton, a consultant, about a project undertaken with children and young people in the Sedgefield Area about young people's experiences of and views about domestic violence.

The findings are set out in Section Eight of the report.

### **Best Practice**

- 4.4 Northumbria University was commissioned to undertake research about best practice in addressing domestic violence. The findings are contained in Section Nine of the report.

## Section Five – What is Domestic Violence? How widespread is it?

### Definitions

5.1 The Government defines domestic violence as:

**‘Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality’**

5.2 This definition includes violence or abuse perpetrated, not just by partners upon each other, but also between adult siblings, or by adult children/carers upon their parents or those in their care. It also includes violence/abuse in same sex relationships (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) and in relationships between those from different cultures (i.e. Black or Minority Ethnic communities). An adult is defined as any person aged 18 years or over. Family members are defined as mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister, and grandparents, whether directly related, in-laws or stepfamily.

5.3 This report examines domestic violence in relation to the following groups:

- Women
- Men
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered People
- Black and Minority Ethnic People
- Young People
- Older People

5.4 Domestic violence can involve violence, threats, or abuse between people who have a relationship with each other (or have had in the past). It can occur between partners; within families; or in shared homes and affects men and women in both heterosexual and same sex relationships. It can be carried out by adult siblings upon each other, or by adult children or carers upon their parents or older people (so-called elder abuse). It happens between people of all cultures, religions or classes and is based on one person having power or control over another. Domestic violence often gets worse over time. **Some bodies use the word ‘abuse’ instead of ‘violence’ because it covers aspects of abuse other than the purely physical. These terms are interchangeable and are used as such throughout this report.**

5.5 Domestic violence is common. Studies show that one in four women and one in six men will experience domestic violence during their life. It takes many forms including physical, sexual, emotional or financial abuse, and being cut off from family and friends. It can also include forced marriage and so-called “honour

crimes". The police estimate that they get a call every minute from someone who is a victim of domestic violence. Domestic violence is not acceptable and no one deserves to be abused.

- 5.6 Some people who live with domestic violence are able to continue relatively normal lives in very difficult circumstances, but others find that leaving an abusive relationship (e.g. by moving away) stops the threats and violence. However, sometimes, leaving or trying to leave can make things even worse.
- 5.7 Women's Aid, a national charity working in the field of domestic violence, identifies the following **factors as indicative of an abusive relationship**:
- **Destructive criticism and verbal abuse**
  - **Pressure tactics, such as sulking**
  - **Disrespect**
  - **Breaking trust - lying and withholding information**
  - **Isolation - telling partners where they can and cannot go**
  - **Harassment**
  - **Threats**
  - **Sexual violence**
  - **Physical violence**
  - **Denial (including crying and begging for forgiveness)**
- 5.8 At the beginning of the project, Angela Sheen (Senior Community Safety Officer) advised the Working Group that:
- **1 in 4 women experience domestic violence.**
  - **1 in 6 men experience domestic violence**
  - **Domestic violence represents 25% of all violent crime.**
  - **There are more repeat victims for domestic violence than for any other crime.**
  - **Nationally, domestic violence claims the lives of 2 women a week.**
  - **Most victims are assaulted 35 times before reporting the matter to the police.**
  - **Domestic violence costs £23 billion a year nationally.**

## **Domestic Violence against Women**

- 5.9 **Women are considerably more likely to experience repeated and severe forms of violence, including sexual violence.** The violence they experience is also more likely to have a sustained psychological/emotional impact or result in injury or death. Findings from the British Crime Survey show that gender is described as a "significant risk factor," as women are more likely than men to experience interpersonal violence, especially sexual violence and that women are the overwhelming majority of the most heavily abused group. For women aged 19-44, domestic violence is the leading cause of morbidity, greater even than cancer, war and motor vehicle accidents.
- 5.10 Among people subjected to four or more incidents of domestic violence from the perpetrator of the worst incident (since age 16), 89% were women. Of those women who had been subject to domestic force, nearly half (48%) had also been

subject to frightening threats and nearly half (41%) to emotional or financial abuse. The Day to Count census research on 28 September 2000 found that 81% of reported domestic violence cases were of female victims attacked by male perpetrators; 8% were male victims attacked by female perpetrators; 4% were female victims attacked by female perpetrators and 7% were male victims attacked by male perpetrators (Stanko, 2000).

- 5.11 Domestic violence can impact on women in a number of ways. It can lead to isolation from family/friends; financial hardship because of loss of income; poor health, including anxiety and depression; physical injury; and ultimately, death. Research in 2001/02 (Flood-Page) showed that 46% of all women homicide victims (as opposed to 5% male victims) were killed by current/former partners.

**When Rebecca met Stephen, she thought he was the man of her dreams. Before meeting Stephen, the 36 year old from Stanley had been trapped in an abusive relationship with the father of two of her three daughters for 11 years. He beat her and she regularly called the police, but the attacks continued.**

**The couple split, but Rebecca found that she had jumped out of the frying pan and into the fire when she moved south to be with her new love. She said, "He had all the patter, a good personality and we got on great. He gave me loads of attention, did everything for me and my daughters who were 15 and 11, and I thought he was fantastic at first."**

**But it was not long before Stephen changed and he became aggressive towards his new family. He drank up to eight cans of beer a night and it was not long before Rebecca's oldest daughter, Lindsey, suspected he was taking drugs because he rarely slept. He also became violent.**

**Rebecca said, "He cut off the oxygen to my throat by strangling me with his hands and used to drag me around the floor by my hair. He would do it in front of the kids and keep me up all night. It was physical and mental torture. He would punch me in the face, kick me, hit me with his razor and also sexually abuse me. It got so bad; I honestly thought he was going to kill me. I started to fear for the lives of me, and my daughters."**

**Rebecca confided in mental health service staff and they found her a place in a refuge for two weeks but she returned to Stephen after he promised he had changed and would stop drinking. She said, "It was even worse when I went back because I had humiliated him and he wanted to punish me." The beatings got worse and eventually Lindsey's teachers asked to meet her. The school, teachers and police all knew about Stephen because he had been in prison for violence in the past and split with his former family because of his behaviour.**

**Rebecca knew she had to leave and, with the help of social services and her children's school, she arranged to flee for the final time. But when she returned to Stanley, her daughters told her Stephen had sexually abused them. Lindsey tried to hang herself and took an overdose of tablets while the family was still living with Stephen but Rebecca never understood why. Since the truth has come out, both Lindsey and Leanne have attempted suicide. The family is still too traumatised to press charges but Rebecca hopes Stephen will, one day, pay for his crimes.**

Derwentside Domestic Forum Annual Report 2005/06

5.12 Data gathered by Women's Aid also indicates that:

- 1 in 4 women experience domestic violence in their life and between 1 in 6 to 1 in 10 women suffer domestic violence every year. (Council of Europe, 2002)
- In the 2001/02 British Crime survey, 89% of the people who experienced more than four incidents of domestic violence were women. (Home Office, 2004)
- The 2001/02 British Crime Survey found that more than half (57%) of victims of domestic violence experience violence on more than one occasion. (Home Office, July 2002)
- The 2001/02 British Crime Survey found that there were an estimated 635,000 incidents of domestic violence in England and Wales. 81% of the victims were women (Home Office, July 2002)
- Nearly one half (45%) of women who responded to the 2001/02 British Crime Survey and one quarter (26%) of men reported being victim of either domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking. (Home Office, 2004)
- Every minute in the UK, the Police receive a call for help for domestic violence. This means the police receive about 1,300 calls about domestic violence each day or over 570,000 each year. (Stanko, 2000)
- One woman is killed every two days by a current or former partner. (Criminal Statistics, Home Office, 1995)
- 1 in 5 young men and 1 in 10 young women think that abuse or violence against women is acceptable. (Zero Tolerance Charitable Trust, 1998)
- In 2003/04 142,526 women and 106,118 children received support for domestic violence in England. (Women's Aid, 2005)
- An estimated 156 disabled women and 61 disabled children received support for domestic violence in England on the Women's Aid census day, November 2, 2004. (Women's Aid, 2005)

5.13 Data collated by Women's Aid shows that, for many women, the first incident of domestic violence occurred after one year or more for 51% of the women surveyed; between three months and one year for 30%; between one and three months for 13% and under one month for 6% of women. Amongst a group of pregnant women attending primary care in East London, 15% reported violence during their pregnancy; just fewer than 40% reported that violence started whilst they were pregnant, whilst 30% who reported violence during pregnancy, also reported they had at some time suffered a miscarriage as a result.

5.14 Research shows that women are at greatest risk of homicide at the point of separation or after leaving a violent partner and more than half of all women who leave abusers do so because they fear for their lives or those of their children. The British Crime Survey found that, while for the majority of women leaving the violent partner stopped the violence, a significant minority said it did not. For these, victimisation by stalking and other forms of harassment may result. There are also issues where children are present and contact arrangements may lead to opportunities for perpetrators to exercise further domestic violence upon former partners.

## Domestic Violence against Men

- 5.15 Although research shows that it is mainly women who suffer domestic violence, men can also be victims too, although it is difficult to state with any accuracy the true extent. In a Home Office Research Study (191- Domestic Violence: Findings from a new British Crime Survey self-completion questionnaire) published in 1999, the questionnaire uncovered relatively similar levels of recent domestic assault for both men and women within the year prior.
- 5.16 The 2001/02 British Crime Survey (BCS) found 19 per cent of domestic violence incidents were reported to be male victims, with nearly 50% of these having a female abuser. Men have exactly the same rights as women to be safe in their own homes and all statutory services have a duty to provide services to all, whatever their gender. Men are also protected by exactly the same laws as women - anyone who has assaulted another person, regardless of the gender of either, can be prosecuted.
- 5.17 The responses of male victims to domestic violence can be the same of those of women in relation to some issues, but differ in relation to others. Many male victims find it difficult to discuss violence being perpetrated upon them, because they feel it reflects on their masculinity. The Scottish Crime Survey 2000 found that men were less likely to have been repeat victims of domestic assault, less likely to be seriously injured and less likely to report feeling fearful in their own homes than women. The survey retraced men who were counted as victims in the Scottish Crime Survey and found that some of those who claimed to be victims of domestic violence were also perpetrators (13 of 22). Some 13 out of 46 men re-interviewed later said they had actually never experienced any form of domestic abuse (Scottish Executive Central Research Unit, 2002).
- 5.18 The 1999 Home Office Research Study explored whether the consequences of domestic violence were the same for men as for women. It found that:
- On average, the incidents reported to the survey by men were less serious than those reported by women.
  - Men were less upset by their experience, considerably less frightened, less often injured, and less likely to seek medical help. It was not possible to determine from the survey why this was so. Possible explanations were:
    - Men were more willing within the context of a crime survey to report 'trivial' incidents that women felt inappropriate to mention;
    - The prevalence of assault was relatively equal but the outcomes tended to be less serious for men because of their, on average, greater physical strength;
    - Male victims were less likely to admit, for reasons of shame, embarrassment, or machismo, the true seriousness of outcomes of assaults by women.
  - An important consideration was the extent to which men and women have the option of leaving violent relationships; on balance it was suggested that men are more likely to have the necessary financial resources and to be less constrained by family responsibilities.

5.19 A study into the experiences of 100 men affected by domestic violence published in 2004 by Dewar Research and based on a survey undertaken in 2001, suggested some bias against male victims of domestic violence, with fathers particularly affected (see Mankind website). For English and Welsh victims, the survey found:

- 50% were threatened with a weapon;
- 33% were kicked in the genitals;
- 16% were burnt or scalded;
- 40% received severe bruising to the body;
- 75% were assaulted once a month or more frequently; over two thirds were assaulted more than 10 times;
- 35% reported that the police had totally ignored what they had to say;
- 47% reported that they had been threatened with arrest despite being the victim;
- 21% said that they had been arrested despite being the victim;
- 3% reported that the violent female partner had been arrested;
- Female assailants called the police nearly as often as the male victim (53% of occasions compared to 59%);
- No female assailants arrested and subsequently charged were convicted.

5.20 This would appear to indicate that there are some male victims of domestic violence whose experiences can mirror that of women who are similarly abused, albeit that the male response to domestic violence (i.e. being able to move on and being financially independent) may differ.

## **Domestic Violence in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Relationships**

5.21 Domestic violence in lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender relationships is not always recognised or acknowledged by individuals or agencies. As a consequence, lesbians, gay men and those who are bisexual or transgendered, do not always get the help and support they need to deal with these experiences. Representatives from Gay Advice Darlington and Durham and Bishop Auckland Women's Refuge spoke to the Working Group about domestic violence in same sex relationships or those where a person was transgendered.

5.22 The Working Group heard that estimates of the numbers of people in the LGBT community vary, but are generally accepted to be in the order of 10% of the UK population. Of these, research has shown that approximately 25% will experience domestic violence at some point in their lives, similar to that in the heterosexual community. There are different types of domestic violence in the LGBT community:

- Same sex domestic violence - perpetrated by partners or ex-partners of LGBT people who may be lesbian, gay, bisexual or heterosexual.
- Homophobic domestic violence - perpetrated by family members against lesbians and gay men on grounds of their sexuality.

- Biphobic domestic violence - **perpetrated by family members against bisexual people on grounds of their sexuality.**
- **Transphobic domestic violence** - perpetrated by family members against transgender people on grounds of their gender identity.
- **Child abuse: homophobic, biphobic and transphobic** - Young people under the age of 18 years may experience homophobic, biphobic or transphobic child abuse from family members.

5.23 The GAD representatives referred to studies which had been undertaken by Sigma Research (2003) and the Universities of Sunderland and Bristol (2006) which looked at the prevalence of domestic violence among the LGBT community. The main findings from the 2003 survey were:

- Some 22% of **women in same sex relationships** suffer domestic violence from a regular sexual partner and 19% of this group had suffered some recurrent abuse. The main form that abuse took was insults/put downs or being belittled (58.6% of those abused), followed closely by being physically attacked (56%).
- Some 29% of **men in same sex relationships** had suffered domestic violence from a regular sexual partner and 24% of this group had suffered some recurrent abuse. The main form that abuse took was insults/put downs or being belittled (60.8% of those abused), followed closely by being physically attacked (54.5%).
- 87% of women who had been abused had not reported it to the police.
- Just over 81% of men who had been abused had not reported it to the police

**“And then, sort of like the texts and the phone calls started happening and then I was like, getting really, really – first I was like angry and then I was frustrated and then sort of like, scared about what he could do. D’you know – and then he told me about him being raped, which I’m not sure if I believe, ‘cos he did like, lie quite a bit, and then him not using a condom on me, which again, I don’t know whether that was true. And then, that, he just started to turn really nasty”.**

A young gay man talking about his experience after leaving an older male partner  
Universities of Sunderland and Bristol Study, 2006

5.24 The 2006 findings (Universities of Sunderland and Bristol) were that:

- Domestic abuse is a sizeable problem in same sex relationships
- The experience of domestic abuse in gay and lesbian relationships is similar to that in same sex relationships, although gay men are more likely to experience sexual abuse
- As with heterosexual communities, people under 25 years of age are more likely to report domestic abuse
- Many people in same sex relationships may not recognise domestic violence, because many experience emotional and sexual abuse rather than physical abuse

- Post separation abuse is a major problem, just as in heterosexual relationships.
- 5.25 Lesbians, gay men and bisexual people can contact the National Domestic Violence Helpline or the new specialist LGBT domestic violence helpline called Broken Rainbow for advice and support but there are currently very few specialist refuges and services for members of the LGBT community. The Working Group heard from the GAD representatives that most calls for support to Broken Rainbow (the national LGBT helpline) from people living in the County Durham and Darlington areas were referred on to GAD.
- 5.26 Lesbians can use women's services such as women's refuges, although some may be wary of using generic services for fear of homophobia from either staff or heterosexual service users. Lesbian couples who are fleeing one partner's previous abusive partner (sometimes male) may find it harder to find refuge accommodation, as some refuges will not accept couples. There are currently very few safe temporary bed spaces specifically available for gay men fleeing domestic violence. The Gay Men's Shared Housing Project (which is London based but which accepts UK referrals) provides 17 bed spaces for gay men escaping domestic and homophobic violence. The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act has made significant changes to the Family Law Act which have equalised the rights of lesbian and gay cohabitants with those of heterosexual cohabitants. Lesbians and Gay men who register their relationships after the Civil Partnership Act comes into effect on 21st December 2005 will also gain the equivalent of Matrimonial Home Rights (and other rights) currently only given to heterosexual married couples. The Working Group also heard that the Regulations about equality in provision of goods and services for people from the LGBT community should, hopefully, lead to better provision in this field.
- 5.27 The Sunderland and Bristol Study was one of the motivating factors in the organisation of a regional conference to raise awareness about LGBT domestic abuse which was held at Newcastle in December 2006. There was wide representation from direct and indirect service providers, both from across the region and nationally, at the event. One of the major outcomes was the establishment of a North East Steering Group on Domestic Violence which will seek to continue to promote work and raise awareness of LGBT domestic abuse issues across the region. **Some of the ideas suggested from conference for taking this work forward include:**
- **An audit of services to establish their usage by those experiencing abuse in same sex relationships (and so establish a baseline against which improvements can be measured**
  - **A region-wide awareness campaign within LGBT communities about domestic abuse**
  - **Establishing an annual conference to keep the focus on the issues**
  - **Organising training for workers.**

## **Domestic Violence in Black and Minority Ethnic Communities**

- 5.28 Whilst for many women in black or minority ethnic communities, their experiences of domestic violence will mirror those of other women generally; there are some important differences and additional complexities, which require special consideration or different approaches in terms of support. Peter Kaszefko, from the Darlington and Durham Racial Equality Council, provided the following specific evidence to the Working Group about some of these issues.
- 5.29 Peter expressed the view that, in terms of culture, it is often more difficult for Asian women to admit to having marital problems. This is because if a marriage fails, it is often seen as being the woman's fault and she will be blamed for letting down the family's honour. There has also been much publicity in recent years about so-called "honour killings" (murder). In terms of religion, Islamic principles state that when women marry, they enter into a contract with their husband. The husband can terminate this contract and only he has the right to divorce his wife. If the husband does not want to comply with this, he can prevent giving a religious divorce to his wife. Sometimes a BME woman may have an uncertain immigration status, which may prevent her from accessing services. She may also be hesitant to take action against her partner for fear of losing her right to remain in the UK. There are also often language issues, which prevent or impede BME women from accessing support.
- 5.30 Some of the key areas of domestic violence in BME communities, in addition to that between partners outlined above, include:
- Forced Marriage
  - Female genital mutilation (circumcision)
  - So called "honour killings" where it is claimed that the actions of a women have brought shame upon her family or that of her partner
- 5.31 Peter Kaszefko commented that forced marriage had been recognised in the UK as a form of domestic violence and a serious abuse of human rights and has been condemned by all major faiths in the world. While forced marriage is not restricted to particular racial, ethnic or religious groups, it may be more common where the practice of arranged marriage is the cultural norm. Children as young as 8 years old may know that they will be expected to marry by the time they are 16 years old. Forced marriage is different from an arranged marriage, where there is free and valid consent of both parties. In arranged marriages, the families of both spouses take a leading role in choosing the marriage partner, but the choice whether or not to accept the arrangement remains with the young people. A forced marriage is where one or both parties do not consent to the marriage, or consent is extracted under duress (this can include emotional pressures or extend to threats, assault, abduction, or in extreme cases, murder).
- 5.32 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is also known as circumcision or cutting. The number of different types of FGM and the procedures vary, according to the type being performed. The World Health Organisation 1997 defined FGM as comprising of all procedures involving partial or total removal of external female

genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs. The practice of FGM is prevalent in approximately 28 African countries, affecting almost 3 million women a year. Although there are no official statistics of FGM in the UK, there is evidence of an increasing number of cases coming to attention of Health and Social Services, as well as to a range of community organisations. There are serious health and social effects of FGM, both immediate and long-term, on those who have undergone these procedures. These procedures are generally performed on girls between the ages of 4-16 years old **and it might therefore be said that FGM is more properly classified as child abuse and therefore a child protection issue.** Despite recent legislation declaring FGM as an illegal practice, it still continued, with parents often taking young girls abroad for purposes of undertaking these abusive practises.

- 5.33 Peter Kaszefko commented that murders in some cultures/religions in the name of so-called “honour” are murders in which predominantly women are killed for so-called “immoral” behaviour (the interpretation of which may vary widely according to culture or religion). This behaviour is deemed to have breached the honour code of a family or community, causing shame. Rumours about “immoral” behaviour of the victim may be sufficient to kill and may include perceived “inappropriate” make-up or dress, an unapproved partner, being gay, rejecting a forced marriage, pregnancy outside of marriage, seeking a divorce or intimacy in a public place. These types of murders are often planned and are sometimes made to look like a suicide or an accident. A decision to kill may be preceded by a family council. Younger relatives may be selected to undertake the killing to avoid senior family members being arrested, or in the hope of obtaining a shorter sentence. Sometimes contract killers are employed. An honour killing may be the culmination of violence and abuse. There is no definition of honour-based violence or crime, but it may include domestic abuse, denial of access to children, pressure to go abroad, house arrest or excessive restrictions. Honour based violence occurs across all cultures, communities and religions.
- 5.34 There is further evidence later in this report about the role of the Racial Equality Council (REC) in providing support to those in the BME community who are subject to domestic violence and about additional factors such as immigration status. Members of the Working Group also noted that there are many diverse communities in County Durham. Reference was particularly made to the growth in Eastern European communities.

## Domestic Violence and Young People

**“I would like to have a worker. I would like to work with someone that I could talk to all the time, an officer to sort out your problems and stuff. I want to meet other people like me, with meetings and activities, somewhere to talk and forget”.**

Young man aged 14 talking about domestic violence in his household  
Sedgefield Study of Young People’s views on Domestic Violence

- 5.35 The Working Group heard in evidence (from Felicity Shenton, who undertook a research study into young people's views about domestic violence in Sedgefield Borough) that there is no reliable data on the numbers of children and young people who are living with domestic violence, or information about those affected by it. What data does exist is associated with other information, including estimates about the prevalence of domestic violence amongst children on child protection registers, or where there is evidence of child abuse. These vary from 30% to between 40-60%; or evidence from families where there is violence by male partners to their female partners also abusing the children, where estimates range from 32-53%. In 1998 an estimated 19,910 women and 28,520 children stayed in refuges in England (Women's Aid Federation). A Department of Health report in 2003 estimated that at least 750,000 children a year witness domestic violence and that 75% of children on child protection registers lived in households where domestic violence occurred.

**Zoe (14) said "Seeing my Mam covered in cuts and bruises was normal when I was growing up. My Dad was convinced my Mam was having an affair and they would row about it all the time. Dad never believed Mam when she said she wasn't and would end up getting violent. He never attacked me, but watching him beat Mam was awful.**

**It wasn't until I got older and chatted to my mates that I realised other parents didn't behave like mine did. I began to feel ashamed of what was going on. Then one day, things got out of hand. Dad began to smash up the house and Mam cried for him to stop. He grabbed a knife and held it to her neck.**

**I was sobbing in terror but my sister ran to the phone and called my uncle. He came round immediately and managed to get us out of the house to safety. Luckily, Mam escaped with just a few cuts and bruises. My parents have split up now. Mam's finally getting her confidence back and Dad's having counselling to help deal with his anger. I feel stronger every day too and, though I'll never forget what Dad put us through, I'll always love him."**

Derwentside Domestic Violence Forum Annual Report

- 5.36 Research in the UK has consistently revealed a link between domestic violence and child abuse:
- In 90% of domestic violence incidents, children are in the same room or nearby.
  - In 25% of cases, a male partner had also been violent to the children either when they have tried to protect their mother or directly.
  - More than a third of children in a violent home know what is happening. The figure rises to up to half if the violence is repeated.
  - Growing up in a household with domestic violence can have a negative impact on, amongst other things, school attainment and being excluded from school.
  - Children outnumber women in refuges, making up 60% of residents.

- Domestic violence can also have a detrimental effect on a child’s emotional and physical health and well-being. A recent Barnardo’s report stated that experiencing or witnessing domestic violence could have long-lasting emotional effects on children through adolescence and into adulthood, affecting their ability to create and maintain relationships, their self-esteem, self-confidence and stability, educational achievement and future career prospects.
- Between 1994 and 2004, 29 children in 13 families (11 with known domestic violence) were killed as a result of contact arrangements with estranged parents. 10 of those deaths occurred in the last two years.
- Children who have been affected by domestic violence are likely to be over represented amongst children abused through prostitution.
- Women who are subjected to domestic violence may be less able to care for their children.
- Acts of or threats of abuse to a pet can be used to control and intimidate women and children to remain in abusive relationships. Research by the NSPCC has shown a clear link between animal abuse, child abuse and domestic violence.

5.37 The effects of domestic violence on children living in rural areas can be particularly severe as lack of transport and physical isolation can make it harder to overcome problems. Domestic violence can also cause the loss of things that are particularly important to children such as pets, friends and familiar surroundings, e.g. on moving to a refuge.

5.38 Young people are not just affected by domestic violence between parents or carers. They can often be carers themselves and receive abuse from the parents or siblings who they care for – however this would constitute child abuse and would be dealt with under child protection procedures. The Working Group met with young carers supported by DISC (Developing Initiatives Supporting Communities – a Durham based Charity that supports disadvantaged people) to discuss these issues (see Section Eight below). Research undertaken in Durham by Disc showed that of the young carers they support, the majority of these are caring for a family member with a physical disability, with a lesser number supporting those with mental health problems. Alcohol and drug abuse may also require young people to take on a caring role. In all the above scenarios young people may also be abused by the person(s) they are caring for.

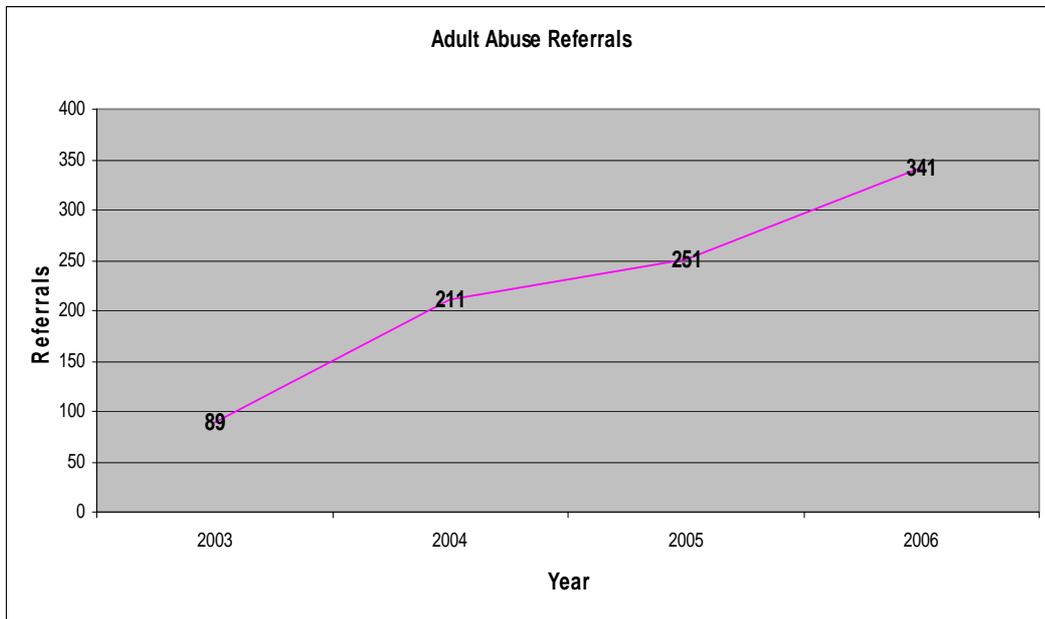
5.39 Research has shown that some young people (one in five males and one in ten females) think that violence towards a partner is acceptable in some situations, e.g. if the woman has slept with someone else. The Working Group heard from DISC that young women can experience violence from their boyfriends (sometimes referred to as “dating abuse”).

### **Domestic Violence and Older People**

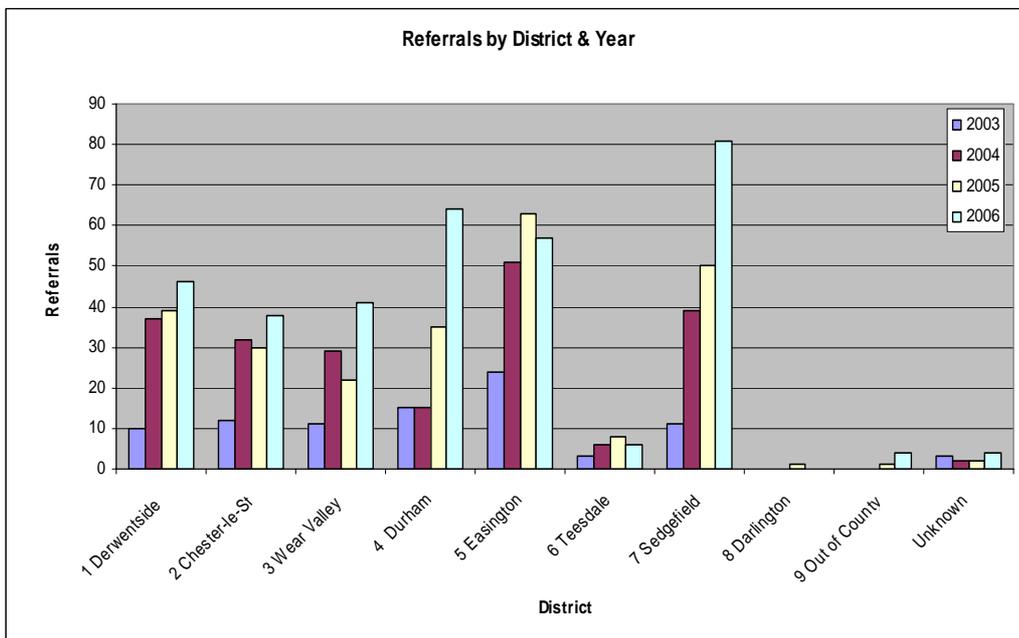
5.40 Just as there is a growing awareness about the impact of domestic violence upon young people, the nature and extent of domestic violence perpetrated upon older people by family members or carers (“elder abuse”) has come to prominence in recent years.

- 5.41 The Working Group received evidence from David Haw, Deputy Chief Officer, Age Concern, Durham, about Elder Abuse. Members were advised that Elder Abuse is **“a single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person.”**
- 5.42 There is no one definitive answer why elder abuse occurs - it can be for a myriad of reasons. Abuse can occur anywhere, whether it is in someone’s own home, a carer’s home, day care, residential care, a nursing home or a hospital. It may be perpetrated by a partner, child or relative, friend or neighbour, paid volunteer or care worker, a health or social worker, or other professional, or by a person they care for.
- 5.43 Abuse itself can take many forms. It may be physical, psychological, emotional, sexual, financial, or manifest itself in neglect, or abusive regimes:
- **Physical abuse** can consist of physical pain, suffering or injury, unreasonable physical restraint, forced medication, misuse of medication, deprivation of care, including food, water or medication. **Deprivation of food is an issue that has recently come to light in hospitals where some elderly patients have been found to be suffering from malnutrition.**
  - **Psychological and emotional abuse** can include racial or verbal abuse, humiliation, insults, ridicule, bullying, threats, enforced isolation, coercion, lack of privacy or choice, lack of respect of cultural diversity, or denial of dignity.
  - **Sexual abuse** is a difficult area. It can include any sexual act carried out without the informed consent of the abused individual such as - fondling, and/or sexual intercourse, offensive or suggestive language, as well as inappropriate touching. It applies equally to both sexes.
  - **Financial abuse** can be misuse of finances, exploitation, theft or fraudulent use of money, embezzlement, misuse of property or possessions. There can be a very fine line between what is financial abuse or appropriate expenditure, i.e. to look after a parent, and it is very rare for there to be prosecutions. Examples may include children taking money from a parent before they go into a care home to protect their “inheritance”, however this may well restrict the choice of care home they go to, or the extra services that they would like to purchase.
  - **Neglect** is ignoring care needs, failing to provide access to health or social care, withholding the necessities of life, or lack of awareness of the individual’s cultural needs and norms.
  - **Abusive Regimes** – This may occur where an institution or care home develop practices or procedures which can result in the abuse of residents, or where families take in elderly relatives and, being unable to cope, are neglectful.
- 5.44 John Thornberry, Head of Adult Services, and Melanie Campbell, the Development and Support Manager, provided evidence to the Working Group about the extent of elder abuse. The Group heard that there had been a move from the concept of protection, to that of safeguarding vulnerable adults. Adult

abuse was previously an under-reported area, but the number of referrals is steadily growing as shown in the graph below. Demographic changes, with projected increases in the number of older people mean this figure is likely to rise still further:



5.45 Figures were also produced to the Group about referrals on a District basis as follows:



5.46 There has been raised awareness of the issues involving abuse of the elderly in recent years, including references to vulnerable adults in the Bichard Report and

“Better Safe than Sorry,” a CSCI Report, which focused on conditions in Care Homes. The Mental Capacity Act 2005 will introduce a criminal offence of ill-treatment or neglect of a person lacking capacity; the power to instruct an Independent Mental Capacity Advocate in adult abuse situations involving a person lacking capacity; and guidance about deprivation of liberty in a client’s best interest where that person lacks capacity. There is also proposed future legislation in relation to The Care of Older and Incapacitated People Bill; and The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Bill.

**Staff at a day centre reported that a 70-year-old man, living with his family, had said that he was not getting meals at home and recognised that he was losing weight. The client did not wish to move from the family home. A Strategy meeting was held and it was agreed that no criminal investigation was required but a protection plan should be put in place. The plan included additional day care; weekend respite; monitoring by health and social care staff; discussions with family; and appointment of an advocate.**

**The situation was then closely monitored.**

**Following an initial improvement, the situation then deteriorated and the client, supported by the advocate, decided to move into long-term care.**

**Case Study**

## **Levels of Domestic Violence in County Durham**

- 5.47 At the beginning of the project, the Working Group was provided with the following data by Angela Sheen showing the extent of domestic violence in County Durham. The most recent data available was for the period from April 2005 to March 2006:

<b>Reporting Area</b>	<b>Incidents</b>	<b>Repeat Victims</b>
Chester-le-Street/Durham City	1226	460
Derwentside	1114	366
Easington	1378	609
Sedgefield	1652	493
Wear Valley/Teesdale	1138	388
<b>Total</b>	<b>6508</b>	<b>2316</b>

- 5.48 The Working Group was advised that the statistics related to all cases of domestic violence regardless of age, gender etc. and that the reporting area split mirrored the former police operational divisions. As regards the data repeat victims, the Working Group heard that these related to two or more reported

incidents within a 12-month period. The statistics were produced annually, however the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships received statistics on a quarterly basis.

- 5.49 In 2002 the number of reported incidents was some 8,000. There was no definitive answer to explain why there had been a reduction in the number of incidents between 2002 and the latest data, but it was more likely to be due to a combination of factors rather than one specific factor. The bare statistics did not give an accurate picture of the situation and therefore it was important for proper analysis of the data. Two analysts had recently been appointed who would be able to analyse the statistics held by the police. However, in relation to the data about age, gender etc. which was recorded by the police at incidents which was held on the PROTECT database and not currently accessible, permission was being sought from the police for this information to be placed in the County Durham Observatory (a data and statistical “warehouse”) which would enable the analysts to assess the information
- 5.50 Rachel Green, the County Domestic Violence Co-ordinator advised there had been changes in the methods of recording, which might have impacted on the statistics. Of particular concern was the number of homicides, particularly those where the police and other agencies were unaware of any previous domestic violence issues. It was explained that there had been a lack of co-ordination between services in relation to information sharing, but there were a number of new initiatives, which would improve the sharing of information. The Government was also to issue guidance for the police and other agencies to undertake homicide reviews. Durham Constabulary would be implementing this in advance of any guidance being issued.

### **Key Issues – What is Domestic Violence?**

5.51 The following key issues were raised in connection with statistical data:

- **There is a need for greater analysis of the data to determine trends and areas for action and targeting of resources**
- **Consideration needs to be given as to whether the current statistical reporting areas (based on the old policing divisions) are fit for purpose**
- **Access to more detailed information in the police ‘protect’ system is required, where possible, to allow for better analysis in terms of gender/sexuality, age, repeat victims, impact on children etc.**
- **There is an issue of under-reporting, as most women are assaulted 35 times before they report an incident to the police for the first time – there needs to be greater publicity and awareness of domestic violence and the County Council has a role to play in this.**
- **The definition of what constitutes a repeat victim in County Durham is that of a person who experiences 2 or more incidents in a 12-month period; however this is not consistent across all authorities and does not therefore allow proper comparisons to be made.**
- **There may be value in knowing the number of families involved in the statistics, but there may be data protection issues.**

## Section Six – Which Agencies Provide Support for the Victims of Domestic Violence?

### Introduction

- 6.1 In scoping for the scrutiny project, it was agreed that the investigation would consider:
- The extent of domestic violence (including that against men and in the LGBT and BME communities)
  - The impact of domestic violence on families and particularly children
  - The extent of abuse of the elderly
  - The support provided to those subjected to domestic violence
- 6.2 Witnesses were identified specifically to provide information in relation to the following areas:
- **Adults**
    - Police
    - Women's Support Groups/Refuges
    - LGBT and BME Support
    - Accommodation Providers
    - Supporting People
    - Domestic Violence Forums
    - Victim Support
    - Crown Prosecution Service/Courts
  - **Children and Young People**
    - Children and Young People's Service/Local Safeguarding Children Board
    - Child Protection/Vulnerable Children Services, County Durham Primary Care Trust
    - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
  - **The Elderly**
    - Adult and Community Services
    - Age Concern County Durham

### The Role of the Police

- 6.3 The Police Service is the agency which most often has first contact with individuals who are subject to domestic violence. The Working Group received a presentation from Police Inspector Michael Button (Northern Area) about violence against the person (VAP) and Domestic Violence.

- 6.4 Domestic violence forms the largest category of violence against the person (VAP). Whilst many of the offences linked to domestic violence fall within the remit of Sections 4, 4A and 5 of the Public Order Act, 1986 (Harassment, Alarm or Distress), they can also include offences linked to possession of weapons, assault (upon partners, etc.) and assault upon police officers. **There is no specific offence of domestic violence.**
- 6.5 The Working Group heard about the procedures for logging calls reporting incidents of domestic violence. This begins with the initial telephone call about the incident to the police control room. A risk assessment is undertaken for each call, and these are prioritised for a police visit according to set criteria (i.e. physical violence would receive priority, verbal abuse, a slower response and so on) with all incidents being attended to within 2 hours.
- 6.6 The way in which domestic violence is addressed by the Constabulary in Durham is set out in a force-wide Domestic Violence Policy which seeks to provide all personnel with clear information about policing of domestic violence; set out the roles and responsibilities of all personnel within Durham Constabulary in response to domestic violence; and provide guidance on scene attendance, investigation and risk identification, repeat victimisation, prosecution and support to victims and witnesses. (It does this via a series of checklists for officers.) There is a reference to the Policy document on the Force website, and the document is not restricted, but it is not currently accessible in electronic form.
- 6.7 Police Officers do as much as they can on a first visit to record evidence, capturing details using video, stills or audio. The evidence may be useful in showing the victim's heightened state, i.e. - sometimes the victim may name the suspect. If the suspect is arrested and prosecuted, the video footage may be produced to show the victim's panic or fear. Often, by the time that the police arrive, the perpetrator will have left the scene of the incident.



The Cylon head-mounted video camera

- 6.8 There is no distinction in the crime recording criteria between domestic violence and assault. The police officer(s) record details on a COMS 87 form, which is then assessed to determine what actions should be taken (i.e. arrest of the perpetrator). There may be a need to refer some cases under Multi-Agency Public Partnership Arrangements (MAPPA), which require the police, probation and prison service to work jointly with other agencies (who have a duty to co-operate) in these arrangements and include health, housing, education, social services, youth offending teams, Jobcentre Plus, and electronic monitoring services, to assess and manage the risks posed by offenders in local communities. Where young people are believed to be at risk, Juvenile concern forms may be completed and passed to Social Services.
- 6.9 In County Durham the operational arm of the MAPPA is the joint police and probation Public Protection Unit based at Probation Headquarters in Durham. The unit manages and administers the MAPPA process and oversees the supervision of Registered Sex offenders and other MAPPA offenders. It is jointly managed by a Senior Probation Officer and a Police Sergeant and is staffed by four Police Constables, four Probation Officers and a MAPPA administrator whose post is funded by the Prison Department. Depending on the nature of the domestic violence incident, there may be a need to develop an intervention plan about how future incidents should be tackled if they occur. Details may also be added to the police PROTECT database which links into the child and adult protection databases.
- 6.10 When the police become involved and prepare a file on a domestic violence incident, it is then for the Crown Prosecution Service to determine whether there is enough evidence to continue with a case. The Crown Prosecution Service may decide to proceed even if a victim decides not to give evidence in court. Rates are improving and the prosecution rate is now about 65%.
- 6.11 The Group heard that domestic violence in some areas of Derwentside was amongst the highest in the County and particularly in Consett North and Havannah Wards, where it was reflected in high levels of violence against the person. Operation "Morello" had been undertaken in February and March 2006 to tackle domestic violence in Craghead, South Stanley, and Southmoor. The Working Group heard that 57.5% of VAP occurs on a Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, which suggests that it may be related to the night time economy. The average age of both offenders and victims is 17, and VAP is on a steady increase.
- 6.12 Partnership Action Plans to reduce VAP, alcohol related VAP and Domestic Violence were being developed and representations were to be made to the Derwentside Community Safety Partnership about partnership structures and support around VAP so as to ensure all partners are consulted and agree to the action plan, and to provide a sustainable performance management framework suitable for all partners to continue to reduce VAP.
- 6.13 The Violence Against the Person and Domestic Violence Group membership included the Domestic Violence Organiser, Outreach, the Primary Care Trust, Probation and Licensing. It shared information, undertook risk assessments and determined whether or not to intervene. The National Intelligence Model had

previously just considered crime statistics, but now included the number of incidents perpetrated, which meant that the information should be captured earlier, as research indicates that on average 35 incidents of domestic violence took place against a person before they first reported it. The tactical group met fortnightly.

- 6.14 The Group heard that the tactics employed to reduce domestic violence were to share information with partners, to undertake pro-active home visits with outreach, to have a cocoon-watch where others are encouraged to report incidents of domestic violence, e.g. neighbours; to use enhanced evidence gathering systems which include the Cylon head camera, and if a victim withdrew from being a witness, to consider use of new legislation which still enabled a prosecution to be made. Details of victim support and how perpetrators of domestic violence are brought to justice are included elsewhere in this Section of the Report.

### **Women's Support Groups and Refuges**

- 6.15 For those individuals subjected to domestic violence, there is a need for:
- Support to ensure that they and any children are protected and are able to stay in their own home if they so wish, with their friends and family around them; or
  - A place to go to, and help to rebuild their lives for those who need to flee domestic violence and abuse.

### **Women's Aid and Women's Refuges**

#### **Women's Aid**

- 6.16 Fiona Nichol from Bishop Auckland Women's Refuge provided the Working Group with information about Women's Aid and the support provided by the organisation at Bishop Auckland refuge.
- 6.17 Women's Aid is a national charity whose mission is to provide advocacy for abused women and children and to ensure their safety through **protection**, by influencing laws, policy and practice and working in partnership with national and local agencies; **prevention**, through raising public awareness and developing education programmes; and **provision**, by providing services needed to help abused women and children such as the National Domestic Violence Helpline. The first Women's Aid federation was set up in 1974, providing practical and emotional support as part of a range of services to women and children experiencing violence. The main aims of the organisation are to:
- Empower women who have been affected by domestic violence
  - Meet the needs of children affected by domestic violence
  - Provide services run by women which are based on listening to survivors
  - Challenge the disadvantages which result from domestic violence
  - Support and reflect diversity and promote equality of opportunity

- Promote cohesive inter-agency responses to domestic violence and develop partnerships

## **Women's Refuges**

- 6.18 Perhaps the most difficult issue confronting those who flee domestic violence is that of finding accommodation for themselves and their children (if any). Refuges are shared accommodation for women who have experienced violence, threats or abuse from someone who lives with them or used to live with them. They are also beneficial, in that other residents who have experienced similar situations can provide friendship and emotional support. Women workers staff most refuges.
- 6.19 Many refuges are ordinary houses but some are larger, purpose-built buildings. Some of these may have self-contained accommodation which may be suitable for families, although there are some refuges which may not accept sons over the age of 12 in which case staff will usually help to find alternative accommodation for young males to stay in. In most refuges, women will get a room of their own (which may be shared with their children) but they will usually have to share a living room, kitchen and bathroom with other residents. Some refuges have rules about bedtimes for children and when washing machines or telephones can be used. Many do not allow male visitors and there are usually protocols to ensure that the address of a refuge is kept secret to protect everyone living there.
- 6.20 Most refuges are open to any woman who needs to get away from violence or abuse, regardless of age or the nature of the relationship with the perpetrator. There are some refuges for women with particular cultural or religious needs, such as Asian or Irish women. Many have disabled access. Women can usually stay in refuges for as long as they need to. If unemployed or on a low income, in many refuges, workers can check whether women can claim any benefits (including housing benefit) and assist with claims. They can help a woman to find somewhere more permanent to live if they do not want to return home.
- 6.21 Many refuges are run by either Women's Aid or Refuge (both national charities whose aim is to support victims of domestic violence). There is no statutory funding for refuges. Women may choose to go into a refuge in their own area, or for reasons of safety can go to one in a different part of the country. Places in refuges can be found via national 24-hour helplines, or women may be referred to them by local support agencies. It is often not possible to find a vacant place in a specific refuge in advance but normally somewhere can be found for those fleeing violence and abuse somewhere to stay on the same day.

## **Bishop Auckland Refuge**

- 6.22 Fiona Nichol, the Manager of the Refuge, explained to the Working Group that refuges were first established approximately 30 years ago, and at the time were run by volunteers, with conditions in most refuges being very basic. Refuges provide temporary accommodation for those who are fleeing domestic violence whilst more permanent housing and other issues are resolved. Some members

of the Working Group had previously attended a Conference at Beamish and had heard an outline from Erin Pizzey about the first refuge for battered women, which she established in Chiswick, London, in 1971. She later went on to write, *Scream Quietly Or The Neighbours Will Hear*, one of first books written which highlighted the issue of wife battering. Erin Pizzey commented at the conference about how the Refuge movement had developed considerably over the years, but she felt that there was a growing need for more specialist refuges for victims from the LGBT and BME communities.

- 6.23 The Group heard that the refuge at Bishop Auckland covers the areas of Sedgefield, Wear Valley, and Teesdale. It can accommodate 6 families and as it is nearly always full, families often have to be sent to other areas. There is a mix of people in the refuges and they are from all socio-economic groups, as well as differing ethnic groups. They include women from countries such as Slovakia and Poland, or from the Far East. Some of these are “bought brides” obtained via the internet and when they are no longer wanted, their husbands keep their passports and they are often turned out and, having nowhere to go, end up on the streets. These women have diverse needs and as many have only been in the country for a short amount of time, they have no recourse to public funds for NHS treatment etc. and refuges are unable to obtain any funds for them in relation to housing support.
- 6.24 Some women coming into the refuges are dependant on alcohol, or prescribed drugs/street drugs, but many refuges are not geared to deal with them. There are some services available for drug dependency but there is very little available to those that need help with alcohol problems. There are some outreach services, which provide community advocacy, including welfare, legal, and housing advice. Police officers spend some time in the refuge as part of their training. As there is a solicitor who attends the refuge one day per week, and the police come into refuges to undertake interviews it is less daunting for women to discuss their issues in the refuge rather than going to a solicitor’s office or police station.
- 6.25 As part of the scrutiny investigation, a small number of Working Group members visited Bishop Auckland Women’s Refuge, to view the accommodation, and speak to the staff and residents. Information about the visit and consultation with staff and residents is set out in Section Eight below.

### **Durham Women’s Refuge**

- 6.26 The Group also received written evidence from Susan Cartmell about the Durham Women’s Refuge. This is operated under the auspices of the Three Rivers Housing Group. Durham Women’s Refuge has been in existence for nearly 30 years and is typical of many of the refuges that were developed in the 1970s. It is a large house with individual bedrooms, but other facilities, such as kitchens and bathrooms, are shared. Its location, in the centre of Durham, is very important in that women are able to access local services and are also afforded the anonymity which would not be possible in a small village type location.
- 6.27 Three Rivers Housing Group took over the management of the refuge from a voluntary management group in 1993. This was viewed by staff, who had experienced both the voluntary management group and Housing Association

management, as an extremely positive step, both in terms of services for women and the quality of the refuge fixtures and fittings. The current refuge can accommodate up to 5 women with or without their children. New premises will be available early in 2007, which will have 9 self-contained flats. Room sizes in the current refuge mean that large families cannot be accommodated and should the larger family rooms be occupied, the refuge is unable to take women with more than one child in the other rooms.

6. 28 During consultations with women about the development of a new refuge, it was highlighted that, although self-contained accommodation would be welcomed for reasons of privacy, they also felt very strongly that communal space should be a priority, as much of the support in refuges comes from the women themselves. They felt that completely self-contained accommodation could be extremely isolating and so, although the new refuge will have individual flats, a large communal lounge will also be provided.
6. 29 In relation to referral pathways, information leaflets (currently under review) are distributed to those agencies which may come into contact with women requiring refuge space. The telephone number, which is a public number, is listed in local directories of services as well as being periodically posted in regional newspapers and Three Rivers tenant's newsletters. The refuge accepts referrals from agencies, as well as directly from women themselves and also provides telephone support should a woman be unsure about coming to a refuge. Whilst it is important for staff to complete a risk assessment to ensure the refuge is suitable both for the woman being referred and those already living in the refuge, it is always borne in mind that women may be in a crisis situation and may need to leave their own home immediately, so this process is kept fairly brief.

**“A recent example of a referral in a crisis situation was from a GP who had a woman in her surgery and whose partner was being violent and aggressive in the waiting room. The woman had been assaulted and was in obvious and immediate danger. The GP spoke to a member of staff at the refuge who spoke briefly to the woman, a taxi was organised and the GP let the woman out of a rear entrance of the surgery and she was brought to the refuge. In these circumstances, a drawn out referral process could have added to the woman's distress. In any event, we would always try to speak to the woman herself both to reassure her and ascertain whether a refuge is her choice.”**

Submission from Durham Women's Refuge

- 6.30 If there are no vacancies in Durham Women's Refuge, they are able to contact other refuges regionally or nationally and will always find space. However, this may be some distance away in the short term. For some women, it may be necessary for safety reasons to move them away from the area completely on a more permanent basis. Suitable refuge accommodation would be located. The nature of domestic violence also means that Durham Refuge takes women from other areas for their safety and this is another reason why the location is important in terms of access to local services and facilities.

- 6.31 The level and nature of support provided at Durham Women's Refuge is informed by the women themselves and is established through the completion of a support plan which staff use as a tool with the woman to focus on particular areas of support. It is felt important to help women to focus on areas in which they would like to be supported. However, it should be their choice to accept as much or as little as they determine, particularly as they have invariably come from situations in which their choices have been limited or controlled.
- 6.32 Areas of support include both emotional and practical elements. Staff are experienced in the issues around domestic violence and have good networks with other statutory and voluntary agencies. The type of areas can include:
- General counselling/advice and emotional support
  - Specific support/advice around domestic violence issues
  - Support and advice around children/parenting
  - Confidence and self esteem building
  - Access to training/employment advice
  - Advocacy
  - Community and support networks in preparation for move on
  - Empowerment
  - Life skills
  - Assistance with filling in forms/literacy
  - Resettlement assistance
  - Support for moving on to independent living
  - Support around alcohol/drug issues/referral to specialist agencies
  - Support around mental health issues.
- 6.33 The refuge has links with, among others, the Bridge Women's education project, North East Council for Addictions, Family Link, Graduate mental health worker (provides sessions at the refuge for individuals) and a liaison health visitor. There are also good relationships with lone parent advisors at the Department of Social Security, Claypath Medical Practice and the City of Durham Council Housing Department.
- 6.34 Durham Women's Refuge does not have funding for any work with children although staff do provide support for them. This is not specialised and specific time cannot be allocated. As the current refuge is in Durham City, they are unable to use existing services such as Sure Start, as they do not fit into their geographical boundary. The move to the new premises will, it is hoped, resolve some of these issues. A children's area will be provided and funding bids will hopefully result in the employment of a children and young persons' worker who will provide support to children and assist with parenting issues. The new premises are also close to the new children's centre attached to Laurel Avenue Primary School.

## **Other Refuge Issues**

- 6.35 Rachel Green, the County Durham Domestic Violence Co-ordinator also provided information to the Working Group about the practical support that is available to the victims of domestic abuse. It was explained that there were refuges in Darlington, Bishop Auckland, Peterlee, Durham and Consett. Whilst there was no refuge in Sedgefield, which is one of the highest reporting areas, there is a support service in Newton Aycliffe called '31'. Funding had been sought for a refuge in Newton Aycliffe, but this had not been successful. However, there were 3 safe houses in the Sedgefield area for women fleeing domestic violence, although none of them had a support worker. Safe houses were used whilst a woman was in transition to a new home, but they were not suitable however for women categorised as 'high risk'.

## **Longer Term Accommodation**

### **Housing Options Service**

- 6.36 For the majority of victims who have fled domestic violence (either to a refuge or the homes of family or friends) there is a need at some point to think about more permanent housing provision and support. This may be within the same area, but for many victims, who do not wish to live near the perpetrator of the violence, it may be some way distant and, for those who are most fearful, this might be other parts of the UK.
- 6.37 Lynne Kitto of Easington District Council provided evidence to the Working Group about the role of the District Council in relation to housing support. The Group heard that her role as a Housing Options Officer involved helping those who were homeless or threatened with being homeless. In the period from April 2005 to March 2006 the District Council of Easington dealt with 300 homeless acceptances, 116 of which were related to domestic violence – 6 of these were men. They offer same sex interviews, and often have a representative from the East Durham Domestic Violence Forum present at interviews (if the applicant agrees) who can advise on other matters, e.g. legal issues, obtaining injunctions etc.
- 6.38 Often, it is discovered in the interview with applicants that there may not be a need for housing provision. There might be other issues such as providing additional security measures at the applicant's existing property (so-called "target-hardening"), or obtaining injunctions, which enable the victims to stay in their own home.
- 6.39 For those who do need re-housing, there are a range of services available and the Housing Options Officers work closely with East Durham Homes, Registered Social Landlords (e.g. Housing Associations) and a number of private landlords. Although at one point in time there had been an oversupply of Council houses, many of these had been demolished or sold off and it was now increasingly difficult to obtain Council housing. One area of difficulty that was being encountered in the private sector concerned the need to secure bonds for

accommodation. It was also important to recognise that re-housing was only one stage in the process; it was essential to provide floating support for victims who were re-housed to enable them go forward and re-build their lives.

## Supporting People

6.40 For those who flee domestic violence and require support within refuge accommodation or longer-term housing provision, the role played by Supporting People in terms of **funding** this provision via providers is important. Supporting People is a national policy initiative, led by the Government and introduced on 1st April 2003. It is an amalgamation of different funding sources aimed at providing 'housing related support'. Supporting People focuses on 'housing related support' only and not care or personal care, which is funded by other agencies.

6.41 'Housing related support' is the support which some people require to help them live independently; find suitable accommodation; settle into stable accommodation; or simply to maintain their current situation in their daily lives. This might be via:

- Help provided by a warden in sheltered housing.
- Community Alarm services.
- Help for young people leaving care to prepare for independence.
- Support for people who have been homeless to help them set up and manage their home.
- Hostels and independent living schemes where people have access to on-site support staff.

Some people need long-term or permanent support, whilst others just need short-term help to support them through a crisis.

6.42 Before April 2003, 'housing related support' provision was financed from a variety of sources including Housing, Housing Benefit, the Health service, the Probation service, voluntary agencies and charities, Social Care and Health (formerly Social Services), and the Housing Corporation. The 'housing related support' costs from **some** of these different funding sources were incorporated into one national fund called the Supporting People Fund. This new fund pays for 'housing related support' services and was £14.6 million for 2005 – 2006 in County Durham. The Durham and Districts Supporting People Partnership (DDSPP) was established to administer the Supporting People Fund and manage the Programme.

## The Durham and District Supporting People Partnership

6.43 The Working Group received a presentation from Dave Shipman and Jenny Warren about the Supporting People Partnership in County Durham. The Partnership enables local authorities to strategically plan; fund and review supported housing services that enable people to live independently in the community; to bring together existing funding streams; and to fund "housing-related support services. The Partnership includes the County Council, District

Councils, Primary Care Trust, Probation, service users and service providers, with the County Council being the administering authority. The Partnership has a five-year Strategy. Following approval of the strategy by the Government, the Partnership has entered into contracts to commission/re-model/decommission services.

- 6.44 In relation to the current provision for domestic violence, County Durham has less accommodation based units and floating support units per head of population than in comparison to the national provision. More research is needed in Durham on domestic violence and the demands it will place on such provision. National data indicates that many women escaping domestic violence have secondary or complex needs including mental health, and drug and alcohol misuse. The Partnership is working strategically with the Mental Health NHS Trust and the County Durham Drugs and Alcohol Action Team to provide a more joined up approach. There is also significant evidence suggesting a need for specialist provision for older women and those from the BME community.
- 6.45 In County Durham, there are units available at Bishop Auckland (Wear Valley Women's Aid), Terentia House, Consett (Norcare), Durham (Three Rivers), and Peterlee (North Tees Women's Aid). All, apart from Bishop Auckland and Durham, receive funding from the Supporting People Programme for outreach/resettlement services. The annual spend for 2005/06 was £552,165. In 2006/07 the amount to be spent will increase as floating support services are extended. Refuges in Durham and Easington Districts are also having new builds. A grant application for a new home to be built in Derwentside has not been successful so alternative methods of financing this will be explored. It is becoming increasingly difficult to gain planning applications for new refuges due to concerns by local people in those neighbourhoods.
- 6.46 Of the reviews of Partnership provision undertaken in relation to 2003-06 there were a number of key issues raised. Generally, the reviews had found that staff were dedicated and professional, but were working in difficult circumstances. Providers had acknowledged that Supporting People has had a positive impact on the quality of services. There are problems accessing housing, particularly local authority accommodation, alternatives to social housing, and a lack of floating or move-on support. Children's work is not eligible for Supporting People funding, and this is now channelled through the 'Every Child Matters' agenda. There was limited charitable funding for some work with children. There are security issues in relation to refuges with some not staffed 24 hours.
- 6.47 There were also issues relating to health and safety in relation to children; access for male children who are 16 or over was not catered for at a number of Refuges. Hygiene and cleanliness was also an issue. There had been a lack of an inspection framework, but one had now been put in place and the local authority had statutory power to inspect. There are difficulties when there are shared facilities, lack of play space and activities, and access for women and children with disabilities. There were funding issues with the high unit costs for overnight security/support; for the new Durham refuge; for children's support; and the lack of countywide floating support.

- 6.48 There was much good practice, including the aims, purpose and remit of refuges being available to all agencies in writing; there were CRB checks for all refuge staff, and consistent adult and child protection policies, there are named contacts for each refuge from Social Care and Health, and from Housing. There is statutory funding from Every Child Matters for children's work and there are new refuges in Durham and Easington.
- 6.49 The Strategic Priorities for the Partnership are:
- A new refuge in Durham
  - Extension of floating support services county-wide through a holistic service,
  - Cross authority commissioning for BME women, women with complex needs, male survivors, same sex and cross gender
  - To develop and strengthen links between organisations/ partnerships including Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, Community Safety, Police, Probation, and District Councils
  - Provision of a range and different types of support
  - Provision of suitable and appropriate accommodation
- 6.50 It was explained that there were growing numbers of men who were fleeing domestic violence, although the support they needed was different to that for women.

### **Key Issues – Refuges and Housing Support**

6.51 The following key issues were identified:

- Refuges are often full – demand for support is greater than provision.
- There is no refuge in Sedgefield District (where levels of recorded domestic violence appear to be the highest), although there are a number of “safe” houses in the Borough.
- There are growing numbers of bought brides, who, because of their short period of residency in the UK, have no access to public funds. Their husbands may hold their passports and some are living rough on the streets. It is difficult for Refuges to obtain benefits (i.e. housing benefit) for these women, although they are not turned away.
- Some women have turned to alcohol, prescribed drugs or street drugs because of their experience of domestic violence. Some may have mental health problems. Refuges are not geared towards support for this and whilst there are some services available for drug dependency, the provision of services for alcohol problems is limited. This may require more input from the DAAT.
- There are difficulties in getting planning permission for new refuges because of lack of understanding and opposition from local residents, yet in areas where refuges are sited, there are no reported problems.
- 75% of residents in refuges are children.
- Target hardening in Easington (via the Homesafe project) has proved to be successful, but funding is time limited and mainstreaming of this type of funding is an issue.
- There is a need to develop refuge provision for those from the BME and LGBT communities, for men and for women with older male children.
- The provision of floating support for those who have been re-housed is important in enabling them to re-build their lives.

## Domestic Violence Forums

- 6.52 In addition to national bodies such as Women's Aid and Refuge, which provide support to the victims of domestic violence, there are many local bodies (often partnerships), which have been developed over the years to provide support at a locality level. There are five Domestic Violence Forums (or equivalent) in County Durham in Easington, Derwentside, Sedgefield, Durham/Chester-le-Street and Wear & Tees. A diagram showing the structure and composition of Domestic Abuse Services across County Durham is contained in Appendix 2.
- 6.53 Members of the Working Group attended the annual conference hosted by Derwentside Domestic Violence Forum in October 2006 at Beamish Hall to gather information for the project. The Working Group also received evidence from Paula Sugden, a Domestic Violence Outreach Worker in Easington, about the services provided by East Durham Domestic Violence Forum. All of the Forums have links to the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) and, in the case of the Durham/Chester-le-Street, Sedgefield and Wear and Tees Forums, they also constitute task or action groups of the CDRPs.
- 6.54 Most Domestic Violence Forums depend upon external funding (either direct or support in-kind) from a variety of sources for their existence. This may be from the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, or charitable donations, or combinations of these. The Derwentside Domestic Violence Forum receives support from the Big Lottery, Supporting People, Sure Start, Derwentside District Council, the Primary Care Trust and BBC Children in Need, amongst others, together with in-kind support (in relation to areas such as training) from Durham County Council. East Durham Domestic Violence Forum receives support from Sure Start, the County and District Councils, the PCT, Durham Constabulary, local businesses and so on. As such, the need to constantly seek out funding to ensure the continuance of local Domestic Violence Forums and the work they undertake is a matter of concern. Members who attended the Derwentside Forum Annual Conference in October 2006 learned that a number of posts within the Forum had been lost because of the cessation of funding by a major contributor.
- 6.55 East Durham Domestic Violence Forum provides a range of practical and emotional support systems for women and children affected by domestic violence who enquire about this service. This ranges from providing a sympathetic ear, to providing practical support for those fleeing domestic violence, by way of accompanying women to solicitor's appointments, or accessing appropriate counselling services. The outreach service seeks to meet the individual needs of each woman. The Forum has established 13 safe meeting points, which are in clinics, cafes etc. where victims of domestic violence can meet with support workers, thus ensuring their safety and that of the workers. These will be expanded as new Sure Start venues are set up around the District. A telephone helpline is provided for women and agencies 7 days a week.
- 6.56 Derwentside Domestic Violence Forum provides a similar service to that in East Durham, including:

- Referral to refuges
- Making contact with a solicitor and support through any process necessary;
- Attending appointments with solicitors, court appearances and provision of reports if necessary
- Assistance with any change in benefits, housing problems and completion of forms,
- Attendance at appointments and provision of reports for appeals, if necessary
- Referral to any other agency which may be appropriate, with the victim's permission only, e.g. welfare rights, NECA and MIND
- Provision of a trained counsellor who has volunteered to work specifically with victims of domestic abuse
- Opportunities to attend a variety of support groups to help victims feel less isolated, regain their confidence and improve self-esteem

6.57 In Easington District, the East Durham Forum also works closely with a number of other agencies, including the Police and the District Council (particularly Housing Options Officers). Paula Sugden advised that a local initiative, Homesafe, which provided target-hardening of victim's homes, had enabled 45 women and children to be kept safe in their own home; however funding would run out in March 2007 and this was a concern. They were working with East Durham Homes and with private landlords to see if they could continue the scheme.

6.58 Details of outreach referrals handled by East Durham Forum in 2006 (January to mid November 2006) were provided to the Working Group. There had been 125 referrals, the largest number of which had come from women themselves, via the helpline. The data provided to the Working Group included information about locality of victim, whether or not the victim's property had been target-hardened, the referral method, age, ethnicity, whether or not the person was a repeat victim, as well as any specific needs such as alcohol, drugs or mental health issues.

### **The Victim Support Service**

6.59 Those individuals who endure domestic violence are victims. Victim Support is an independent national charity which helps people cope with crime. It has a network of local branches across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. There are separate organisations covering Scotland and the Republic of Ireland. Anyone affected by crime can contact Victim Support directly for help. Any person who reports a crime to the police will also be put in contact with Victim Support, if they ask. Victim Support trained volunteers offer:

- someone to talk to in confidence
- information on police and court procedures
- help in dealing with other organisations
- information about compensation and insurance
- links to other sources of help.

6.60 Services provided by Victim Support are free and available to everyone, whether or not the crime has been reported and regardless of when it happened. Victim

Support is an independent organisation - not part of the police, courts or any other criminal justice agency – and is in contact with over 1.25 million victims and witnesses every year.

- 6.61 Many witnesses feel worried about going to court, regardless of whether or not they are the victim of the crime. Victim Support runs the Witness Service in every criminal court in England and Wales to give information and support to witnesses, victims, their families and friends when they go to court. They help:
- witnesses who are called to give evidence, including defence witnesses
  - victims of crime and their families/friends attending court for any reason
  - children, as well as adults.
- 6.62 Clare Sandford, from Victim Support in County Durham, based at Spennymoor, provided information to the Working Group about the role of the Victim Support Service within the County. Members heard that victims of all types of crime (including domestic violence) are supported. She advised that the national standards for victim support are:
- Raising awareness of the impact of crime on people and communities
  - Increasing understanding of victims and witnesses needs
  - Supporting victims and witnesses of crime and their partners, friends and families
  - Influencing other agencies that work with victims and witnesses of crime
  - Encouraging victims and witnesses to make their own choices and to develop strategies for managing their experience
  - Promoting victims and witnesses rights
- 6.63 In County Durham, there is a Victim Support Community Service with 50 volunteers and 3 outreach workers; and a Witness Service supporting those who appear in court, staffed by 60 volunteers; together with the national support helpline. In the period April to September 2006 domestic violence victims to the Witness Service had risen to 8.7% of all referrals. Referrals came from the police crime management unit, and other agencies, as well as from direct approaches. Both male and female victims were supported.
- 6.64 The community based outreach workers and volunteers offered a wide range of support including personal support, explaining police procedures, representing people in Criminal Injuries Compensation Board applications, (this was an under-recognised area) specialist help and support for those subject to sexual violence or attempted murder, and practical help such as accompanying people to police stations.
- 6.65 The witness service offered support by letter initially 3 weeks before trials were held and then by telephone 2 weeks before any trial date. The service offered witness familiarisation with venues, talking through worries and concerns about appearing in court, providing somewhere private for witnesses attending court away from the main waiting areas, assistance with expense forms, etc. Extra support was offered to vulnerable and/or intimidated witnesses. The Working Group was advised that when victims of domestic violence do attend court to give evidence, some 60% of defendants change their plea to guilty. It was

explained that Victim Support currently does not work with children, as they do not have the resources, but they hoped to do so soon.

### **Key Issues - Domestic Violence Forums and Victim Support**

6.66 The following key issues were identified:

- The County Council has little involvement in East Durham Domestic Violence Forum meetings
- Criminal injuries compensation work is offered and undertaken by Victim Support. This is an area of support that has not yet been fully developed, yet offers a significant opportunity for victims to obtain what can sometimes be substantial compensation.
- There is sometimes a reluctance on the part of some agencies to refer victims to other agencies for more appropriate support
- More support for children is required from Forums and the Victim Support Service
- A formalised directory showing up to date services and the types of support available for victims would be helpful

### **The Role of the Health Service**

6.67 Diane Richardson, Designated Nurse in Child Protection provided information to the Working Group about the support provided by health professionals to victims of domestic abuse. Primary Care Trusts have a duty to work within Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships to reduce crime, including domestic violence, under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Guidance for healthcare professionals working with those who have experienced domestic violence is contained in the handbook "Responding to Domestic Abuse". The guidance is primarily targeted at abuse perpetrated against women and children, but does recognise that people in same-sex relationships and men can be victims as well.



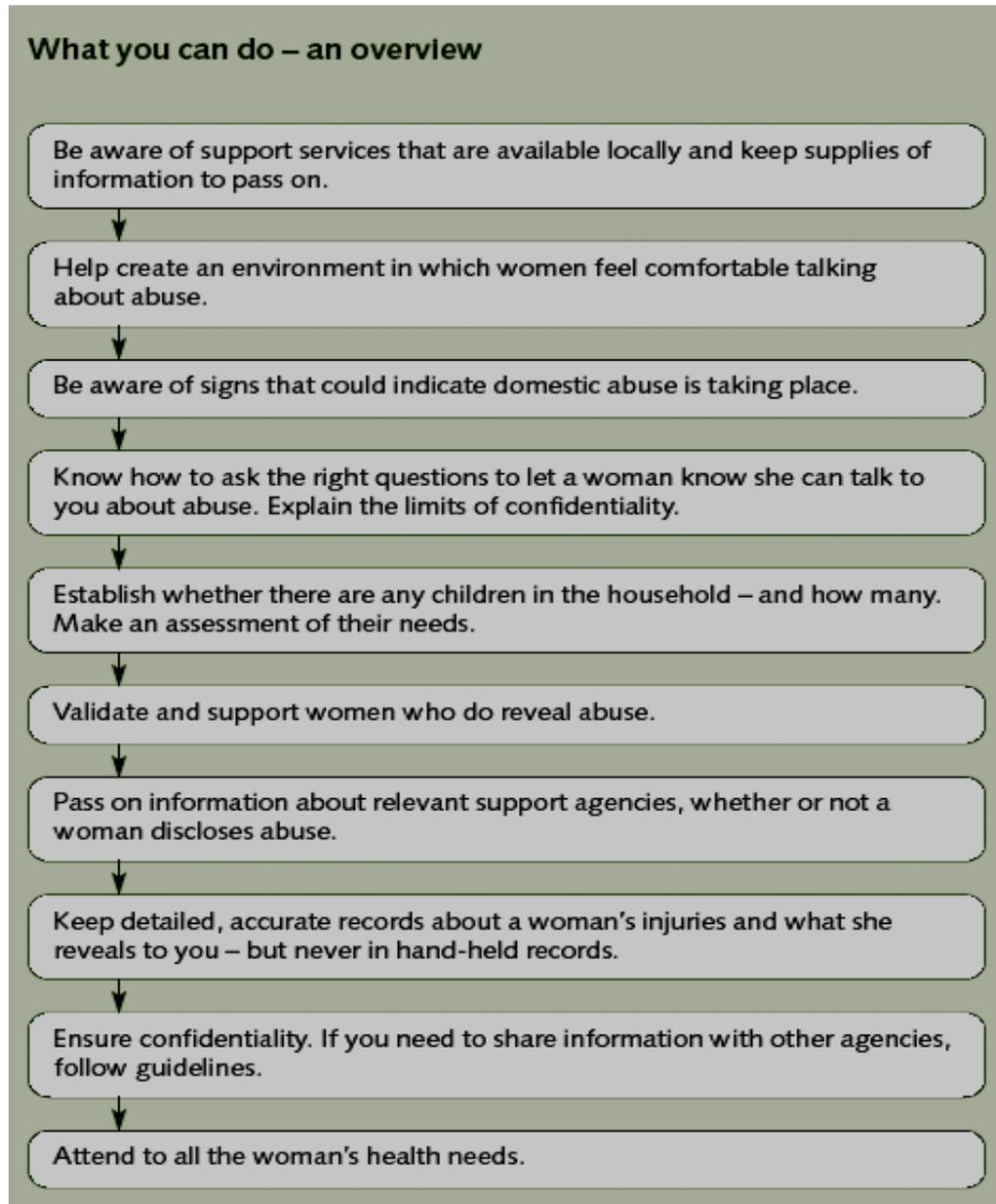
- 6.68 Health costs for the National Health Service in 2004 attributable to domestic violence were estimated in the guidance as follows:

<b>Health costs</b>			
	<b>NHS/state</b>	<b>Patient</b>	<b>Total (£'000s)</b>
Hospital and ambulance	1,158,053		1,158,053
GP visits	24,672		24,672
Prescriptions	25,779	1,463	27,242
Travel and lost wages for GP visits		10,280	10,280
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>1,208,504</b>	<b>11,743</b>	<b>1,220,247</b>
Mental health	176,000		176,000
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>1,396,247</b> (rounded up to £1.4 billion)

- 6.69 Like the police, health professionals are often the first point of contact for those women (and children) who have suffered domestic violence. They are likely to be admitted more often to hospital than those who are not abused and to have more prescriptions. For some victims, a healthcare professional may be the only professional person they see who can identify abuse and thus provide a lifeline to the support needed. A woman's health records can also play an important role in identifying domestic violence/abuse. The guidance for health professionals concentrates on the following areas:
- The role of the health professional
  - How to create a supportive environment
  - Asking about domestic abuse
  - What to do if a patient discloses domestic abuse
  - Keeping Records
  - Confidentiality and information sharing
- 6.70 The Good Practice Guidelines place great emphasis on ensuring that professionals only ask questions about domestic abuse in a safe environment.
- 6.71 The Working Group heard that one of the greatest difficulties was that of sharing information, and there were limitations in what health professionals could do due to medical confidentiality issues. Much training has been undertaken within the service about the recognition of domestic abuse, and one area of particular note was that, often, domestic abuse started when a woman was pregnant with her first child. It was important to record everything in case the matter went to Court.
- 6.72 It was recognised within the Health Service that staff were often victims themselves.
- 6.73 Safeguarding children is crucial, and all health professionals would refer to Safeguarding and Specialist services where there were concerns about children

or an unborn baby. In Durham there was good multi-agency working in relation to safeguarding children and police referrals were made to named nurses and health professionals when officers attended any incident where children or pregnant women were involved. Following police referrals involving school-age children, arranging contact with women safely in order to gain access to children was often a dilemma. **There was also a need for more support for children in their own right.**

- 6.74 The flow chart below, which is contained in the Health Service Good Practice Guidelines, provides a suggested overview of the stages to be followed by healthcare professionals when domestic abuse is suspected:



## The Crown Prosecution Service and Role of the Courts

- 6.75 Bringing the perpetrators of domestic violence to justice is key to ensuring that those who commit offences are punished and those who might seek to inflict such violence are deterred from so doing. The Working Group received a presentation from Janet Mason of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) about the initiative involving the Crown Prosecution Service and Magistrates' Courts in County Durham (and Darlington). This area of development was also the subject of a presentation at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Domestic Violence Conference held in London on 15 November 2006, which was attended by the Chair of the Working Group and Senior Scrutiny Support Officer.
- 6.76 The Working Group heard from Janet Mason that one of the difficulties in dealing with domestic violence cases in the past was that, when a complaint was made to the police, only 50% of those cases resulted in a court appearance and successful prosecution. This was because retraction statements were often filed, with many victims not being willing to follow through their original complaint. Time played a role in this, with perpetrators having an opportunity to seek to persuade complainants to withdraw the case. Often, the individuals might get back together and the victim would then decide to withdraw from any action.

## Sensitive Issues Courts

- 6.77 To counter the above problems, the Local Criminal Justice Board (Police, Courts Service, CPS, Probation Service, Prison Service and Youth Engagement Service) introduced **Sensitive Issues Courts** in 2005 in County Durham and Darlington, being the first area in the country to do so. Victim Support, the County Durham and Darlington Domestic Violence Core Strategy Group, Darlington and Durham County Racial Equality Council and Gay Advice Darlington and Durham also support the initiative. Sensitive Issues Courts are Magistrates' Courts, which deal with cases of:
- Domestic violence
  - Racist or religious offending and
  - Homophobic or transphobic offending.
- 6.78 These courts sit at Consett on Mondays, Newton Aycliffe on Thursdays and Peterlee on Fridays and aim to put the victim at the heart of the process. They have been established to show that the local criminal justice agencies take sensitive cases seriously, with the aim of encouraging people to come forward and report abuse against them, and to give them support to ensure they stay involved in the criminal justice process. In 2005/06, the first full year after the courts were set up, the number of cases of the 3 types set out above which reached Court increased from 464 to 817 (a 76% increase). These figures were projected to increase further in 2006/07. The success rate for domestic violence prosecutions had risen by the end of 2005 to 85% in the south of the County and 82.6% in the north of the County (an average of 83.8%) The successful outcomes rate had fallen to 67% by the end of 2006. It was felt this might be because victims were refusing to give evidence, or saying they lied in their

original Statement, which would mean that in the absence of any other evidence the case would fail. This was said to be a worrying development, because, in any future Court proceedings, the validity of Statements provided by victims who had previously sought to abort cases by saying they had lied, might be a factor which a subsequent Court could be asked to take into consideration, thus putting those individuals in danger.

- 6.79 The Working Group heard that, if the perpetrator was convicted, there was a range of options available to the court. Many perpetrators tried to minimise the incident or blame someone else for how they had acted. In the past, many Courts would impose a conditional discharge as a sentence, but this was much less likely nowadays with Courts having a greater range of sentencing options available including supervision (by the Probation Service) and/or requirements for attendance at perpetrator programmes. There were 4 programmes running in the County and these could also be accessed voluntarily, although at the time the information was provided to the Working Group all programmes were full. It appeared that those programmes which were the most successful involved perpetrators with children, to whom access might be lost if they did not comply with attendance.
- 6.80 The Working Group heard that the national context for Specialist Domestic Violence Courts was to ensure that the criminal justice system was part of a “Co-ordinated Community Response” to domestic violence. Five models had been piloted in selected areas in 2003/04 and evaluation had shown that:
- The number of domestic violence cases reported to the police which resulted in a case at court had risen
  - The number of cases lost before trial due to withdrawals and discontinuances had fallen
  - The number of perpetrators brought to justice via increased early and late guilty pleas and convictions of defendants had increased
- 6.81 Standards and principles for Specialist Domestic Violence Courts have been developed by the Crown Prosecution Service, Home Office and Department for Constitutional Affairs. There will be funding and support for these courts and funding for Independent Domestic Violence Advisors and Independent Sexual Violence Advisors. Some 11 core components, which represent good practice in a specialist domestic violence court, have been identified. These are:
- Multi-agency partnerships
  - Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACS)
  - Identification of Domestic Violence Cases
  - Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs)
  - Trained and dedicated criminal justice staff
  - Court listings
  - Equality and Diversity
  - Data collection and monitoring
  - Safe court access and facilities
  - Links to Children’s Services
  - Perpetrator programmes

- 6.82 As part of evidence gathering for the project, the Chair of the Working Group and Senior Scrutiny Support Officer observed a domestic violence trial at Peterlee Magistrates Court on the afternoon of 19 January 2007. The case involved a young woman from Seaham and her boyfriend/partner and concerned two offences, alleged to have taken place in July and November respectively of 2006.
- 6.83 The first offence was that of criminal damage. In the outline received by the Magistrates it was said that the young woman's boyfriend/partner had returned to her home late in the afternoon, apparently the worse for drink. When challenged about this, it was said that the defendant had gone to the refrigerator in the house, taken out a can of beer and sat down to drink it. He had then smashed up furniture and various ornaments in his partner's home.
- 6.84 The second offence related to an alleged assault by the young woman's partner upon her in November 2006. This was said to have taken place following an argument between both parties in the young woman's house, which had then continued out, into the street.
- 6.85 Proceedings for the hearing were delayed for some 45 minutes due to negotiations between the parties. When the hearing did commence, Magistrates heard that the young woman and her partner had now reconciled. The Crown Prosecutor referred to the fact that, although the young woman had previously given a statement to the police about the alleged offences, she was not prepared to give evidence in Court and was only present in the building because she had been summonsed. In the circumstances, a deal had been brokered between the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the defendant's solicitor, which involved substitution of a lesser charge of causing harassment alarm or distress for that of assault. The defendant, when put to plea, then pleaded guilty to the original charge of criminal damage and the substituted lesser charge.
- 6.86 On considering the issues, and the defendant's previous record (which did not indicate any recent offences against the person), the Magistrates imposed one year conditional discharges on both counts, together with an Award of costs in favour of the CPS (to be paid weekly by the defendant).
- 6.87 In speaking later to Court staff, the Chair was advised that for the hearing to have proceeded (albeit with a less favourable outcome from the point of the CPS), was uncommon and that many trials were abandoned because of the unwillingness of the injured party to appear, often in instances where reconciliation has subsequently taken place.

### **Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs)**

- 6.88 The Working Group heard that issues about the development and effectiveness of MARACs were discussed in a presentation by Jan Pickles, OBE, Director of the Cardiff Women's Safety Unit at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Domestic Violence Conference supported by Refuge and held in London on 15 November 2006, which was attended by the Chair and Senior Scrutiny Support Officer. The Conference heard that a review of 40+ domestic violence homicides had revealed the following as being significant risk factors in relation to domestic violence:

- The assailants criminal record
- Use of weapons
- Nature of injuries inflicted
- Financial problems
- Assailant's problems with alcohol, drugs or mental health
- Victim pregnant
- Assailant expressing/behaving in a jealous or controlling way
- Has been, or is going to be a separation between victim and assailant
- Conflict over child contact
- Threats by the assailant to kill
- Attempts made to strangle/choke
- Abuse worsening or occurring more frequently
- Threatened or attempted suicide by the assailant
- Sexual abuse – rape/indecent assault
- Stalking
- Victim's own assessment – **this is key**

6.89 In terms of partners in any MARAC, conference was advised that the following organisations might form the basis for membership of a MARAC, subject to any local variations (CAFCASS and the CPS are excluded because of possible conflict of interest issues):

- Police
- Probation
- Midwife (Social Services)
- Child Protection Nurse
- Women's Aid
- NSPCC
- Housing
- Black Association of Women
- Social Services – Child Protection, Intake and Assessment, Adult Services
- Education
- Cardiff Women's Safety Unit
- Mental Health Services
- Substance Abuse Workers
- Any other relevant agencies

6.90 The role of a MARAC is to share information between statutory and voluntary agencies, draw up multi-agency action plans; reduce the risks to victims and children and monitor and review cases. Prior to MARAC consideration, victims should be offered - practical support and safety planning, target hardening, police watch, cocoon watch, occurrence marker on police computer and intelligence package. Evaluations of the MARAC process have shown that 63% of victims interviewed had not experienced further violence or abuse at the 6 month point; this had fallen to 42% at 12 months. The remaining 58% had called the police earlier and had confidence that the criminal justice system could deliver.

## Support for Children and Young People

### Child Protection and the Local Safeguarding Children Board

- 6.91 The Working Group heard evidence from Mark Gurney (Strategic Manager Children in Need, Children and Young People's Service), about child protection issues and the role of the Local Safeguarding Children Board in relation to children and young people who might be at risk or affected by domestic violence.
- 6.92 The Children in Need Service is located within the Children and Young People's Service and consists of one initial assessment team and twelve locality children teams across the County. The role of the Service is to provide assessment, care planning and reviewing of the most vulnerable children in County Durham.
- 6.93 The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) also plays an important role. Local Safeguarding Children Boards were established under Section 14(1) of Children Act 2004 and are the key statutory mechanisms for ensuring that relevant partner organisations co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their areas. The County Durham Board comprises representatives from Health, the Police, Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS), Connexions, Probation, County Council (Community Safety), District Councils, Secure Training Centres, and the Voluntary and Community Sectors. LSCBs have a unique, independent statutory role, which involves:
- Agreeing policies and procedures
  - Monitoring and evaluating
  - Reviewing serious cases
- 6.94 Section 120 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 has amended the definition of "significant harm" in the Children Act 1989 to include: "Impairment of health or development caused by witnessing ill treatment of another". **In terms of domestic violence, this may have a significant impact on caseloads and resources.**
- 6.95 There was limited information about the numbers of children and young people affected by domestic violence in County Durham. A Wear Valley and Tees Community Safety Partnership Survey in 2003/04 had shown that children were resident in 41% of households where domestic violence was reported, and of these, 61% had witnessed the violence. An Internal Audit of Child Protection Conferences in 2006 had found that out of 30 cases, 14 had involved domestic violence as a key feature (47%), and 11 out of the 30 cases had involved domestic violence **and** physical abuse of children. Strategic Actions Planned include:
- Ensuring a link between the County Durham Domestic Abuse Strategy and LSCB
  - Local Area Agreement Targets
  - An LSCB Priority for the development of a co-ordinated multi-agency response to domestic violence

- Increased choice and services to children and young people
- Improved data collection about the numbers involved
- Reviewing existing LSCB guidance to ensure consistency of reporting between Police and Social Care Direct
- Developing practice guidance on “significant harm” for professional staff.

## **Mental Health Support for Young People**

- 6.96 Jo Dawson, the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) General Manager provided information to the Working Group about young people’s mental health issues and domestic violence. The Group heard that there are more than 635,000 incidents of domestic violence reported in England and Wales each year. The term domestic violence can be wide-ranging and also includes domestic violence between adolescents or by younger people on their parents. It was estimated that children witness up to 75% of abusive incidents and about half the children in families where there is domestic violence have also been hurt. Sometimes children called as witnesses in domestic violence proceedings need support. Common reactions of young people to domestic violence are manifested in a number of ways. In younger children this may include bed-wetting, and disruptive behaviour. Older children may be disobedient, aggressive, or deliberately self-harm. The impact of being in a refuge can also be significant for young people in terms of loss of contact with friends and other family members.
- 6.97 Domestic violence is often perpetuated through learned behaviour, i.e. **boys whose fathers are violent towards their partners are more likely to do this themselves in adulthood**. There was currently no specific CAMHS provision for young people affected by domestic violence other than in Darlington. There was also an issue about how CAMHS could equip and support staff in those other agencies and services which deal with children’s domestic violence issues.
- 6.98 There were considerable gaps in knowledge about the numbers of young people affected by domestic violence and also very little data about the numbers of young people who themselves are abusers. This meant little or no support was provided for these children. The mental health needs of young people in schools was also an issue and there was a pilot currently running which identified lead members of staff in schools for supporting the mental health needs of young people.
- 6.99 However, it needed to be recognised that support for young people had to be provided in a number of alternative venues and not just in schools, where young people might feel stigmatised. Another key issue was ensuring that there was effective partnership working between all agencies when young people affected by domestic violence were identified.

## **Key Issues in relation to Young People**

6.100 The following issues were identified:

- We have no real idea how many children and young people are affected by domestic violence in County Durham - there are gaps in knowledge about the levels and the issues
- There are inconsistencies across the force area about how the police record data
- The new definition of what constitutes “significant harm” will have implications for resourcing, given the increased demand on services.
- We need to provide services that children and young people can access in non-stigmatising settings – similar issues were raised in a previous scrutiny project - ‘Minding the Gap’ project in relation to “one-stop shops”
- Support for young people in court proceedings is needed
- Refuges – there are issues of loss and separation when young people move into refuges with a parent/carer and a subsequent need for support for these children
- There is a strong case for a domestic violence outreach service
- Support should be undertaken in partnership and through a co-ordinated approach
- Confidentiality issues - sharing data is essential and there is a need for multi-agency protocols to be developed
- Referrals – There seems to be a gap in relation to Drugs and Alcohol Action Teams
- Councillors need more information about children at risk in their areas
- It is important to ask young people what they want and to develop services appropriate to them.

## **The Role of the Children and Young People’s Service - Raising Awareness of Domestic Violence with Young People**

6.101 Jane Stout, Pupil Services Officer, and Denise Howe, Advisory Teacher, from Children and Young People’s Services provided the Working Group with information about the education and support provided within County Durham schools about domestic violence. At the beginning of the scrutiny project, members had viewed a film produced by young actors from County Durham, which was being screened in some secondary schools to help teachers raise awareness amongst pupils about domestic violence. The 15-minute feature – “Victims of Silence” – had been produced by members of the Bishop Auckland Theatre Hooligans (BATH) at the request of Durham Constabulary.

6.102 The video shows how violence in the home can affect young people, their life at school and relationships with friends and family members. More than 20 police

forces across the country are using it in their own areas to raise awareness of the issue. The film is circulated together with a resource pack, containing a CD-Rom, lesson plans and general practice guidance to help teachers make best use of the video in a school setting.

6.103 The Working Group heard that training for Schools had been provided through a number of events, including 'Open Door' Domestic Violence conferences held in March and November 2004 for Secondary schools which had been free (financed by Government Office NE) at which 2 professional staff from each school could attend from the following disciplines:

- Designated Teacher (Child Protection),
- Head of PSHCE
- Counsellor
- Education Welfare Officers

6.104 A Conference for Primary Schools, 'Opening the Door' had also been held in September 2005, which aimed to:

- Raise awareness of the impact of domestic violence on children
- Provide practical ways of incorporating the issues into the curriculum through the Creative Arts
- Include a Police presentation, Drama presentation and workshops using creative writing/poetry, art and drama.

6.105 The Working Group was advised that support in relation to young people's issues was provided via the following sources:

- Pupil Services Officers (Child Protection)
- Guidance and advice about individual cases
- Level 1 Child Protection Training – this includes Domestic Abuse and Safeguarding issues and is provided free to schools
- The Safeguarding Newsletter posted on the schools' extranet
- Local Safeguarding Children's Board courses: Safeguarding Children – a shared responsibility – these are multi-agency and free.
- Social Care Direct; School Nurses; Counsellors
- DV forums: training, Resource Directory (prepared by the County Domestic Violence Co-ordinator)

6.106 Surveys of both Primary and Secondary Schools had recently been undertaken to determine the extent of provision and needs. In relation to primary schools:

- 98 schools had responded (41%)
- 23 had school counsellors or equivalent (i.e. a (Designed Teacher, School Nurse, Educational Psychologist, Place 2 Be, member of Church)
- 11 further included the Head Teacher in this role
- 64% of respondents felt confident that staff knew signs and symptoms of Domestic Abuse
- If Domestic Abuse was an issue, the vast majority indicated they would contact Social Care Direct/Social Care and Health Service or the Local

Authority Child Protection Team (School Nurse, Health Visitor, or local Domestic Abuse staff)

- If a child was at risk of significant harm, 96% of schools said they would know what to do.
- 58% would refer to counselling or other non-teaching professional for support (majority to CAMHS, Place2Be, REACH, Anti-Bullying, or a Family Centre)
- 59% felt that the present PSHCE/SEAL curriculum did not cover Domestic Abuse themes (although some schools were just starting the SEAL programme)
- 14 schools had attended Miss Dorothy.com training and 10 used the resources.
- 86% of schools said they wanted further training and of these, 74% wanted it within the next year
- Types of training suggested included:
  - School-based training
  - Training in cluster groups
  - School based work including drama
  - Day/half day conferences
  - Twilight courses

#### 6.107 As regards Secondary Schools:

- There had been responses from 13 schools
- 2 of these did not have counsellor or equivalent
- 54% were confident they could recognise signs and symptoms in young people
- For advice they would telephone the local authority and Social Care Direct (first speaking to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection; others mentioned police, School Nurse)
- All would act appropriately if they believed there was a risk of significant harm and would refer to an appropriate counsellor for support (anti-bullying or local Domestic Abuse groups outside school if there was no counsellor in the school).
- 54% felt that the current PSHCE curriculum had themes linked to Domestic Abuse
- 8 from the 13 had attended the 'Open Door' conferences but only 3 made use of the DVD 'Victims of Silence' and the resource pack
- Few respondents mentioned other resources, but, where they did, these included the internet, drama groups, guest speakers, police, the school nurse, and National Children's Homes
- All wanted further training, with the majority mentioning school-based staff awareness in particular
- Support is provided to Special Schools and many of these are more aware of issues because of the emotional and behavioural issues exhibited by pupils, which may impact on, or result from their family situations.

#### 6.108 Denise Howe explained that her role as Advisory Teacher was to provide training for teachers in PSHCE. As part of continuing professional development and in-service training (INSET) services were provided to schools on a contract buy-in basis and could include bespoke tailored programmes, but schools could also buy-in from other providers. Current initiatives included:

- PSHE & Citizenship – National Curriculum – (non-statutory)
- SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) – An explicit structured, whole-curriculum framework and resource for teaching social, emotional and behavioural skills to pupils in a primary setting
- “Zippy” – an approach at Key Stage 1 to develop emotional/coping strategies amongst children
- Miss Dorothy.com – Internet Safety aimed at Key Stage 2 pupils
- CAMHS – mental health strategy
- Anti-Bullying Alliance – buddies and min-buds

6.109 Perhaps the greatest challenges in awareness-raising and providing support in relation to issues which might arise from, or be linked to domestic violence, were:

- Partnership working – In relation to the Every Child Matters agenda (i.e. Health, Social Services and Education), and with other agencies such as the Police, Domestic Abuse Forums, Victim Support etc
- Facilitation – the need for variety in terms of training/support offered
- Evaluation of the impact of awareness-raising/support provided because of the “hidden” and sensitive nature of domestic violence
- Providing appropriate support across a broad age range of pupils
- Responding to needs
- The performance driven nature of education which focuses schools and teachers on hitting targets and tends to push other issues to one side

6.110 A flowchart has been prepared for use by schools where pupils are believed to be at risk of harm from domestic violence, which provides a structured template for risk-assessing situations and developing a Plan of Action.

### **Key Issues – Education and Awareness Raising**

6.111 The following key issues were identified:

- The only way to encourage greater school involvement and greater awareness is to provide training free; however there is a cost to schools for releasing a teacher as cover is needed.
- Because of the number of initiatives, there is a need for more co-ordination. It was suggested that an event be held at County Hall allowing all interested groups to come together and discuss initiatives, with a view to achieving a more co-ordinated approach.
- Domestic Violence is not a statutory responsibility, but Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on Local Education Authorities and on School and College governing bodies to make arrangements with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. This duty could be used to encourage greater consideration to be given to domestic violence and its impact upon young people.
- There is a need for a more strategic approach to tackle domestic violence, perhaps with a dedicated (possibly multi-agency) team and dedicated budget working in this specific field.

## **Vulnerable Adults – Adult and Community Services**

- 6.112 John Thornberry and Melanie Campbell from Adult and Community Services gave a presentation to the Working Group about the County Council's role in Safeguarding Adults. This followed on from an earlier presentation to the Group in October 2006 by David Haw from Age Concern, County Durham (see Section Five).
- 6.113 The Working Group heard that there was an overlapping role between domestic violence agencies, safeguarding adults and safeguarding children. Arrangements had been made to address this by the establishment of the Multi-Agency Protection Committee, which involved representatives from Health, the District Councils, Voluntary Sector, Private Sector, and the County Council. Regulatory Bodies such as CSCI also had an important role to play. The Committee had a key role in relation to the management of serious and untoward incidents across the partnership concerning vulnerable adults.
- 6.114 The current structure multi-agency Adult Protection Committee, chaired by the Head of Service (Adults), had overseen:
- The development of policies and procedures - a new policy has recently been produced
  - The development of training programmes for staff across all agencies
  - Monitoring of referrals

The present committee recognised the need to develop the structure and was recommending a new model with more senior representation, and better mechanisms for member involvement.

- 6.115 In relation to the role of the local authority, the Working Group was advised that the County Council had the lead responsibility for procedures, but was not provided with any specific resources to undertake this. Investigations were carried out jointly with the police and strategy meetings were held. If a case was particularly serious, executive meetings are held. All Partners employed a zero tolerance approach to elder abuse, and all employees were screened through the Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) and CRB process. The partners supported the investigation and protection processes. Key roles for the care providers were recruitment, implementing policies and procedures, and training and developing staff.
- 6.116 Between January and December 2006 there were 34 cases referred from a care setting to the County Council. This was believed to be an underestimate of the true incidence of abuse, because recording systems were not yet robust enough, and there was still a lack of understanding of the safeguarding adults agenda in some services. The elderly population was the most rapidly increasing group and therefore potentially, this was an issue the authority would need to plan for. It was also important to recognise that adults with learning difficulties formed a significant part of those referred.

6.117 There were concerns around a number of issues linked to the vulnerable adults agenda and the position regarding independent sector providers concerning:

- Levels of staffing and staff training (often due to the high turnover of staff)
- Difficulty in meeting care standards
- Poor levels of knowledge about clients needs
- Issues about medication – not being stored properly or too much medication being given



6.118 The actions taken in the foregoing circumstances might include:

- Admissions to the relevant home suspended (suspension lifted when all concerns dealt with)
- CSCI brought in
- Needs of all residents assessed in conjunction with families
- Action plans put in place
- Safeguarding Adults training provided for staff

## Key Issues – Elder Abuse

6.119 The following key issues were raised in relation to elder abuse:

- Carers can be abused too - it is important they receive support/respice
- Lack of support for the elderly with feeding in hospital, resulting in malnutrition in some patients, needs to be addressed
- There is a lack of a co-ordinated approach of services from child to adult, and from service to service
- Abuse can happen to both sexes
- 95% of the elderly prefer to stay in their own home, and 5% to live with their children. Protection arrangements have to follow this.
- Staffing resources in smaller private care homes can be an issue
- It is estimated that there is 3 – 4 times more abuse than is reported.
- There are systems in place for child protection, but much less developed systems for adult protection.
- How can we change attitudes towards abuse and to the stigma associated with being in a care home?
- Unannounced visits to care homes should be made – what are the procedures for private care homes?
- Training of the 8,000 staff involved in care of the elderly is important and must be properly resourced.
- There are resources issues about enabling older people to stay in their own homes, particularly for those who have no family or with families living away.
- Little is known about the abuse of elderly within ethnic minority groups
- A new model for the Safeguarding Adults Partnership Committee is needed, together with a new Constitution
- Stronger Governance arrangements with enhanced support from members – perhaps similar involvement to that exercised by members in relation to young people (i.e. through the corporate parenting panel) is required
- There needs to be greater joint investment in the development of processes and staff training between partners
- Better and more robust monitoring systems need to be developed
- The elderly population is the fastest growing group of people and reported elder abuse is likely to increase – we must plan for this
- Under-reporting of incidents of abuse - as awareness increases, the number of incidents reported will also increase
- Investing funds is an issue – and whether funding is directed towards prevention, or tackling abuse when it is uncovered.
- Tackling abuse will require a strong multi-agency approach
- Need to raise awareness of the issue within agencies and to increase public perception
- A seminar/conference for members and partners to raise awareness would assist in raising the profile of this issue.

- 6.120 Further evidence about elder abuse and the role of the County Council in safeguarding and protecting the elderly is set out in Section Five of this report.

### **Multi Agency Working Across County Durham**

- 6.121 One of the key features of domestic violence is that it requires true multi-agency working and is cross cutting. In relation to young people at risk, the Local Safeguarding Children Board has a role to play. For vulnerable adults there are similar Safeguarding arrangements. The Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Committees (MARACs) requires partnership working as do the Multi-Agency Public Protection (MAPPAs). In terms of preventing and addressing domestic violence, the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships also have a key role to play through the Crime Reduction Strategies and the Policies/Action Plans in relation to domestic violence, which underpin them.
- 6.122 Arrangements for addressing domestic violence issues in County Durham have been co-ordinated at a strategic level by the County Domestic Violence Co-ordinator. This post initially routed monies to various initiatives in County Durham (and Darlington) via funding from Government Office North East linked to the "Reducing Violence Against Women Initiative". This money was initially used to produce a video for use in schools and to establish a directory of domestic violence services. This funding stream has now likely to be coming to an end (although confirmation of this is still outstanding from Government Office). Durham Constabulary now provides mainstream funding for the Co-ordinator post, which is based at Police Headquarters, Durham, and is currently held by a police officer.
- 6.123 The Government has developed a National Action Plan (see Section Seven) to tackle the issue of domestic violence, which aims to put victims and witnesses at the heart of the process. Each of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships in the County has domestic violence as a key issue to be tackled as part of their Crime and Disorder Strategy and this is underpinned by Action Plans.
- 6.124 There is a County Durham and Darlington Domestic Violence Core Strategy Group on which a Senior Community Safety Officer and colleagues from Safeguarding and Specialist Services represent the County Council (the Senior Community Safety Officer currently chairs the Group). The Group was initially formed following the funding from Government Office North East linked to the "Reducing Violence Against Women Initiative" to establish local targets for tackling domestic violence and to monitor performance against them. The group has wide representation from agencies involved in supporting the victims of domestic abuse (see membership list at Appendix 3), although it was evident that there appear to be omissions of some groups, such as those representing the BME and LGBT communities). This multi-agency group has now moved on to produce a draft Domestic Violence Strategy for County Durham. The draft Strategy for 2006/8 sets out a number of key objectives and will be underpinned by an Annual Countywide Action Plan. Its aim is to provide a framework to ensure the active contribution of partner agencies in tackling domestic violence and supporting victims, but there is no statutory requirement for agencies to

deliver against the Plan. Terms of reference have been subsequently supplied to the Working Group and are attached at Appendix 4.

- 6.125 It is understood that the Core Strategy Group reports to the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, although there did not appear to be any clear reporting arrangements in relation to the County Council's involvement in the Core Strategy Group. The Working Group was not apprised of whether any mechanisms existed for assessing the effectiveness of the Core Strategy Group/Forum. A diagram showing the relevant structures is contained in Appendix 2.
- 6.126 The Working Group was advised that the Senior Community Safety officer has no specific responsibilities in relation to domestic violence as part of her job description. Although the County Council provides support for victims of domestic violence across a number of distinct Service areas, as outlined earlier in this Section, there is no one specific officer or team with domestic violence responsibilities, or a domestic violence lead within the Council. The approach to date has been to look at domestic violence as a crime, and thus responsibility has evolved within the County Council's Community Safety Team in Adult and Community Services. The importance of the role currently undertaken across all areas of domestic violence by the senior community safety officer needs to be addressed.

### **Other Key Players**

- 6.127 Effective joint working is also necessary at a local level if victims and witnesses are to get a good service and more offenders are to be brought to justice. Local Criminal Justice Boards were established in April 2003, based on the police force areas. The Boards bring together Chief Officers of police, prison and probation, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Courts and Youth Offending Teams. Together these agencies have a collective responsibility to deliver Government targets and priorities in their local area. The Local Criminal Justice Boards report to the National Board which has a rigorous performance management framework to ensure it receives regular performance reports, monitors delivery of CJS targets and holds Local Boards to account both by supporting good performance and challenging poor performance.
- 6.128 Working together, across traditional boundaries has resulted in new approaches, including - the targeting of prolific offenders; a charging scheme with the Police and CPS working together on a 24/7 basis to ensure suspects are charged with the right offence, resulting in more early guilty pleas and better prepared cases; creation of new Witness Care Units, jointly staffed by the police and CPS to assess the needs of individual witnesses and provide a single point of contact for witnesses from charge through to sentence of the offender; an Effective Trial Management Programme to reduce the number of ineffective trials, involving case progression officers in the Police, CPS and Courts working closely with each other to actively prepare and progress cases in and out of court. There are new challenges, for Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs), CDRPs and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), to marshal the resources of criminal justice agencies, Health, social services, education departments and others, to work

with the key stakeholders in the voluntary sector to provide comprehensive services.

- 6.129 The Government Offices in England and the National Welsh Assembly have an important role in supporting the delivery and performance managing a range of Home Office programmes and initiatives. They have a key role to play in developing regional domestic violence plans/ ensuring that local partnerships are given support, information and advice on delivering domestic violence services.

### **Information about Domestic Violence**

- 6.130 The Working Group heard that, most local publicity available about domestic violence came under the purview of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and Domestic Violence Forums, with a number of methods used to publicise the issues, as follows:-

- Posters – these are displayed in General Practitioners Surgeries, libraries, Community Associations and various Community buildings. Posters emphasise that domestic violence is unacceptable and provide national and local contact telephone numbers.
- The Crown Prosecution Service also publicise this issue by using posters, these posters are available in a range of languages.
- Attending meetings of women’s groups (i.e. W.I.) Rachel Green.
- Conferences – In addition Rachel Green attends various conferences, both regional and national to talk about the issues of Domestic Violence.
- Media Coverage – Articles covering the issue tend to appear when the timing is ‘correct’ around key times (i.e. the run up to Christmas).
- Merchandise – There is an assortment of different merchandise used to highlight domestic violence, i.e. beer mats, information printed in a credit card size format, pens etc. The merchandise is easily available in shops and bars.
- Stickers – These are normally placed on the back of toilet doors.
- Work with G.P. Practice Managers – Rachel Green works on a regular basis with Practice Managers.
- Ad-hoc projects – A project to raise money in Wear and Tees Valley for the refurbishment of the local refuge. The volunteers packed bags in a local supermarket. A variety of merchandise was made available for people to take away with them.
- There is some training for GP Practice nurses, outreach workers, social workers and health staff.

### **Key Issues – Publicity**

- 6.131 The following key issues were raised in relation to publicity:

- No evaluation of effectiveness of publicity material or media coverage
- There is little information targeted at men, either as perpetrators or victims, nor is information available in some “male dominated” establishments such as clubs, betting shops and sports venues
- Members have training/development needs linked to domestic violence
- More multi-agency training needs to be developed.

## Section Seven – What are the National and Local Policies, Strategies and Performance Targets?

### Introduction

- 7.1 The raised profile of domestic violence in recent years has resulted in the development of a number of national policy documents and legislation. Government action on domestic violence is led by an Inter-Ministerial Group on Domestic Violence, set up in 2003, which includes Ministers from key Departments. The Government's strategic approach to tackling domestic violence was set out in the consultation paper "Safety and Justice – The Government's Proposals on Domestic Violence" published in June 2003. This set out three strands for tackling domestic violence based around - prevention, protection, and justice and support for domestic violence victims. The consultation paper and responses to it, formed the basis of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004, the most significant legislation on domestic violence in over 30 years.
- 7.2 In 2005 the Government published its first National Report for Domestic Violence, containing the framework of the National Delivery Plan, which identified five key outcomes and seven work objectives that would be pursued in 2005/06. The Plan provides direction to local partnerships, agencies and communities on how to protect adult and child victims and bring perpetrators to justice.

### The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act, 2004

- 7.3 The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 introduced a raft of new powers for the police and the courts to deal with offenders, as well as measures aimed at improving support and protection for victims. The Act included a number of general provisions, including the introduction of a Code of Practice across criminal justice agencies to ensure proper support and advice for victims; an Independent Commissioner for Victims to champion their interests at a high level in Government and procedures to allow victims to take their cases to the Parliamentary Ombudsman where they believe the new Code of Practice has not been adhered to.
- 7.4 Specific provisions in relation to domestic violence include:
- Common assault to be an arrestable offence.
  - Breach of a non-molestation order, to be an arrestable, criminal offence, punishable by up to five years in prison.
  - Ensuring that cohabiting same-sex couples have the same access to non-molestation and occupation orders as opposite sex couples, including for those couples who have never lived together or been married.
  - Powers for Courts to impose restraining orders when sentencing for **any** offence and to impose restraining orders on acquittal for any offence (or if a conviction has been overturned on appeal) if they consider it necessary to protect the victim from harassment.

- Introduction of mechanisms, which include the key agencies, to review homicide incidents arising from domestic violence, to find out how lessons can be learnt to improve systems and prevent future deaths.
- A new offence of causing or allowing the death of a child or vulnerable adult. This will introduce a new criminal responsibility for members of a household where they know that a child or vulnerable adult is at significant risk of serious harm.

## **The National Domestic Violence Delivery Plan**

7.5 Angela Sheen, Senior Community Safety Officer, provided evidence to the Working Group about the National Domestic Violence Delivery Plan. The objectives of the Plan are to:

- Increase early identification and early intervention with victims of domestic violence
- Build capacity in the domestic abuse sector to provide effective support
- Develop an evidence base
- Promote a co-ordinated community response to domestic violence
- Increase reporting and arrest rates so as to increase the number of perpetrators brought to justice
- Support victims through the Criminal Justice System
- Manage perpetrators to reduce risk
- Understand the nature and scope of the problem and understand what works to reduce prevalence.

7.6 The aim of the Plan is to improve outcomes in the following areas:

- Reduce the number of domestic violence related homicides
- Reduce the prevalence of domestic violence
- Increase the rate of reporting
- Increase the rate of reported offences that are brought to justice
- Ensure victims are adequately protected and supported

## **The National Report for Domestic Violence**

7.7 The National Report for Domestic Violence was published in 2005. In addition to setting out the framework for the National Domestic Violence Delivery Plan, it included a review of progress made in tackling domestic violence issues outlined in the consultation paper, "Safety and Justice" and contained in the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004. The main areas of progress highlighted in the Report were:

- Publication of information sharing advice for practitioners
- Appointment of a National Domestic Violence Co-ordinator within the National Health Service
- A national awareness campaign to promote a 24-hour freephone national helpline number, as well as raising general awareness.
- A national freephone helpline for victims, run jointly by Women's Aid and Refuge

- Funding and distribution to all secondary schools of a new series of the teenage soap series “Watch Over Me”, aimed at educating young people about domestic violence
- Funding the first phonenumber for perpetrators who want to address their behaviour (launched by RESPECT in September 2004)
- Roll out of accredited perpetrator programmes within the Probation Service – these occur following use of the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment (SARA) tool and ensure that the safety of the victim is then managed within inter-agency public protection arrangements
- Funding a national phonenumber for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender communities, launched by Broken Rainbow.
- Publication of good practice guidance on how to implement strategies to encourage and enable disclosure of domestic violence in a range of health settings.
- Publication by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the National Police Training organisation (CENTREX) of comprehensive guidelines for investigating domestic violence
- Updated policy/guidance within the Crown Prosecution Service
- Implementation and evaluation of specialist domestic violence
- A new domestic violence training programme for magistrates and new guidance on sentencing.
- Improvements to existing and new refuge places.
- Publication of good practice guidance in 2004 on how to support children who have witnessed domestic violence: ‘Tackling Domestic Violence: providing support for children who have witnessed domestic violence’
- From January 2005 clarification of the law to ensure that the courts must consider the harm a child might suffer as a result of witnessing violence on another person.
- Introduction of a new definition of domestic violence

## **The County Durham Domestic Abuse Strategy**

- 7.8 In relation to work underway to develop a strategy for County Durham, the draft County Durham Domestic Abuse Strategy 2006-08 aims to increase choices for adults and children experiencing domestic abuse; develop and enhance safe and accessible support services; provide support to children and young people whose lives are affected by domestic abuse; offer children and young people the skills and knowledge to enable them to build relationships based on respect and mutual understanding; ensure perpetrators are held accountable; raise awareness of the extent and impact of domestic violence within communities and across agencies so as to increase the rate of reporting; and to seek to reduce the number of domestic violence related incidents.

## **Community Safety Strategies in County Durham**

- 7.9 The Working Group heard that the County Durham Domestic Abuse Strategy was not a standalone document, but was co-terminous with the seven Community Safety Strategies across County Durham, produced by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, in which domestic abuse featured as a key

strategic priority. There are also specific references to domestic violence in the Community Strategies in two District Council areas – Derwentside and Chester-le-Street - prepared under the aegis of the Local Strategic Partnerships.

7.10 The Community Safety Strategies for 2005/8 on a District/Borough basis are set out below and these include targets as follows:

## **SEDGFIELD CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP**

### **Objectives:**

#### **Government measure**

- Improve quality of domestic violence services.

#### **Local targets**

- Have a maximum percentage of incidents involving repeat victims of 30% by 2008.

#### **Local measures**

- Rates of arrest where powers of arrest are available.
- Level of contact between victims of domestic abuse and outreach support services.

### **Prevention/Intervention:**

We will:

- Work with young people through Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education lessons to change attitudes to domestic abuse.
- Ensure victims receive adequate information on available support services and safety measures.
- Work with perpetrators of domestic abuse to challenge their attitudes and beliefs.
- Have targeted, sustained media campaigns to raise awareness of domestic abuse.
- Develop appropriate accommodation and support options for those experiencing domestic abuse.
- Ensure that there is a consistent, positive response from all partnership organisations in relation to referrals for domestic abuse.
- Improve information sharing in relation to domestic abuse between partners.
- Encourage employers to develop work place policies in relation to domestic abuse.
- Develop policies in relation to the needs of young people as victims, witnesses and perpetrators of domestic abuse following an assessment of needs.
- Support the development of additional floating support services in partnership with the countywide Supporting People Partnership.
- Work towards engaging all health partners.

### **Enforcement:**

We will:

- Work with our partners in the Criminal Justice System to ensure that prolific and priority offenders of domestic abuse are caught and convicted.
- Work with victims to support them as witnesses within the Criminal Justice System.

- Work in partnership to promote early intervention to secure the safety of victims and witnesses.
- Swiftly implement the Domestic Violence Act.

### **Increase Public Confidence:**

We will:

- Improve the communication links between the Partnership and the public.
- Provide long-term support to victims and their families.
- Improve communication links between the Ethnic Liaison Group and the Action Group to ensure the needs of minority ethnic groups are fully considered.
- Provide support to prolific and priority offenders of domestic abuse to help them to break their cycle of offending.

## **WEAR VALLEY CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP**

Domestic abuse is any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners, or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.

Domestic abuse has a devastating effect on victims, their families and the wider community, regardless of race, geography or social background. One in four women and one in six men will be affected in their lifetimes, with women suffering higher rates of repeat victimisation and serious injury. The nature of the crime means that many incidents go unreported, and the full picture of domestic abuse in Wear Valley is not known.

The number of recorded incidents of domestic abuse involving partners and family members has increased by 35% in Wear Valley and Teesdale during the audit period and over half of the incidents were repeat victims. During 2003-4 83% of the victims were female and alcohol was a factor in 45% of incidents. Many of the incidents were witnessed by children.

### **How will we do it?**

We will seek to **prevent** it by:

- Raising the awareness of the impact of domestic abuse
- Proactive advertising of services
- Running perpetrator programmes
- Providing better physical security of the property, including an alarm where appropriate
- Providing personal attack alarms
- Proactive use of the domestic abuse module of the Citizenship programme

We will seek to **enforce** it by:

- Proactive policing

We will **support** by:

- Offering a range of support choices, including Women's Aid, No. 75, and Victim Support

How can **you** help?

- If you witness a violent crime taking place ring 999 immediately
- If you think you or your partner would benefit from the Perpetrators Programme contact: 01388 600094.
- Alcohol plays a key part in violent crime. If you think alcohol is affecting your relationship with your partner, you can get help - contact Castlebridges on 01388 609221.

## **TEESDALE CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP**

Domestic abuse has a devastating effect on victims, their families and the wider community, regardless of race, geography or social background. One in four women and one in six men will be affected in their lifetimes, with women suffering higher rates of repeat victimisation and serious injury. The nature of the crime means that many incidents go unreported, and the full picture of domestic abuse in Teesdale is not known.

The number of recorded incidents of domestic abuse involving partners and family members has increased by 35% in Teesdale and Wear Valley during the audit period and over half of the incidents were repeat victims. During 2003-4 83% of the victims were female and alcohol was a factor in 45% of incidents. Many of the incidents were witnessed by children.

### **How will we do it?**

We will seek to **prevent** it by:

- Raising the awareness of the impact of domestic abuse.
- Proactive advertising of services.
- Running perpetrator programmes.
- Providing better physical security of the property, including an alarm where appropriate.
- Providing personal attack alarms.
- Proactive use of the domestic abuse module of the Citizenship programme.

We will seek to **enforce** it by:

- Proactive policing.

We will support by:

- Offering a range of support choices, including Women's Aid, No. 75, and Victim Support.

How can **you** help?

- If you witness a violent crime taking place ring 999 immediately.
- If you think you or your partner would benefit from the Perpetrators Programme contact: (01388) 600 094.
- Alcohol plays a key part in violent crime. If you think alcohol is affecting your relationship with your partner, you can get help - contact The Castlebridge Centre on (01388) 609 221.

## **DURHAM CITY CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP**

### **Aim**

To improve the quality of domestic violence services.

### **Objectives**

#### **Key targets**

- Reduce the percentage of incidents involving repeat victims to 25% of all incidents by 2008;
- Increase rates of arrest where powers of arrest are available;
- Increase the availability of outreach support services for victims of domestic violence; and
- Establish a database of domestic violence incidents including perpetrators, victims and their children.

#### **Measures**

- Number of incidents of domestic violence reported;
- Number of incidents of repeat victimisation;
- Number of arrests of perpetrators of domestic violence;
- Number of convictions of perpetrators of domestic violence; and
- Number of outreach support services available.

#### **Prevention/Intervention**

We will achieve this by:

- Working with young people through Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education to change attitudes to domestic violence;
- Ensuring victims receive adequate information on available support services and safety measures;
- Working with perpetrators of domestic violence to challenge their attitudes and beliefs;
- Developing appropriate accommodation and support options for those experiencing domestic violence;
- Ensuring that there is a consistent positive response from all Partnership organisations in relation to referrals for domestic violence;
- Improving information sharing in relation to domestic violence between partners;
- Encouraging employers to develop work place policies in relation to domestic violence;
- Developing policies in relation to the needs of young people as victims, witnesses and perpetrators of domestic violence following an assessment of needs;
- Supporting the development of additional support services in partnership with the countywide Supporting People Partnership; and
- Working towards engaging all health partners.

## **Enforcement**

We will achieve this by:

- Working with our partners in the Criminal Justice System to ensure that prolific and priority offenders of domestic violence are caught and convicted;
- Working with victims to support them as witnesses within the Criminal Justice System;
- Working in partnership to promote early intervention to secure the safety of victims and witnesses; and
- Swiftly implementing the Domestic Violence Act.

## **Public Reassurance**

We will achieve this by:

- Providing long-term support to victims and their families; and
- Providing support to prolific and priority offenders of domestic violence to help them to break their cycle of offending.

## **Community Engagement**

We will achieve this by:

- Targeted, sustained media campaigns to raise awareness of domestic violence;
- Improving the communication links between the Partnership and the public; and
- Improve communication links between the Ethnic Liaison Group and the Operational Group to ensure the needs of minority ethnic groups are fully considered.

# **CHESTER-LE-STREET CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP**

## **Domestic Violence (Commentary)**

Victims of domestic violence who contact the police typically suffer from 35 incidents before they do so and therefore domestic violence is significantly under reported. Everyone has the right to live free from fear and violence and therefore victims are encouraged to make contact with the authorities and to get help. In this context an increase in the number of incidents reported is to be expected and welcomed. It is vitally important however that when contact is made the authorities response prevents further repeat victimisation and therefore a target to reduce repeat victimisation by 10% was included in the last strategy. In 2003/04 the percentage of repeat victims had risen from 31% to 37% however by March 2005 the figure had reduced to 29% a 7% reduction. There were a number of subsidiary targets linked to the 10% reduction including the setting up and administering of a program to challenge perpetrator's attitudes and behaviour and the provision of additional security to victims. The police increased the percentage of arrests made, where a power of arrest existed, from 69% to 80%. Dealing with perpetrators and providing support to victims relies upon effective partnership working that requires improving if we are to tackle domestic violence in the coming three years. Development of more effective victim and family inclusive perpetrator

programmes and new legislation contained in the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 will be a priority for the new strategy.

## **Domestic Violence**

The number of domestic incidents between partners or family members reported to the police increased by 15% over the audit period from 502 in 2001/02 to 578 in 2003/04. Victims of domestic violence, however, are encouraged to report incidents therefore an increase in the number of reports can be viewed positively. Domestic violence is under-reported and it is difficult to get a full picture of the problem using police data. Domestic violence has been identified as a priority for the Partnership.

### **Priority 4 (Tackling Domestic Violence)**

Tackling domestic violence has been identified as a local priority. We will do this by improving all services for victims of domestic violence through closer and more targeted partnership working. We will target and arrest the perpetrators of domestic violence. We will work with perpetrators to challenge their beliefs and attitudes. We will provide support to the victims of domestic violence.

### **Tackling Domestic Violence**

#### **Aim**

To improve quality of domestic violence services.

#### **Objectives**

##### **Key targets**

- Reduce the percentage of incidents involving repeat victims to 25% of all incidents by 2008;
- Maintain rates of arrest where powers of arrest are available above 80%;
- Increase the availability of outreach support services for victims of domestic violence; and
- Establish a database of domestic violence incidents including perpetrators, victims and their children by 2008.

##### **Measures**

- Number of incidents of domestic violence reported;
- Number of incidents of repeat victimisation;
- Number of arrests of perpetrators of domestic violence;
- Number of convictions of perpetrators of domestic violence; and
- Number of outreach support services available.

### **Prevention/Intervention**

#### **We will achieve this by:**

- Working with young people through Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education to change attitudes to domestic violence;

- Ensuring victims receive adequate information on available support services and safety measures;
- Working- with perpetrators of domestic violence to challenge their attitudes and beliefs;
- Developing appropriate accommodation and support options for those experiencing domestic violence;
- Ensuring that there is a consistent positive response from all Partnership organisations in relation to referrals for domestic violence;
- Improving information sharing in relation to domestic violence between partners;
- Encouraging employers to develop work place policies in relation to domestic violence;
- Developing policies in relation to the needs of young people as victims, witnesses and perpetrators of domestic violence following an assessment of needs;
- Supporting the development of floating support services in partnership with the countywide Supporting People Partnership; and
- Working towards engaging all health partners.

## **Enforcement**

### **We will achieve this by:**

- Working with our partners in the Criminal Justice System to ensure that prolific and priority offenders of domestic violence are caught and convicted;
- Working with victims to support them as witnesses within the Criminal Justice System;
- Working in partnership to promote early intervention to secure the safety of victims and witnesses; and
- Swiftly implementing the Domestic Violence Act.

## **Public Reassurance**

### **We will achieve this by:**

- Providing long-term support to victims and their families; and
- Providing programmes for prolific and priority offenders of domestic violence to enable them to break their cycle of offending.

## **Community Engagement**

### **We will achieve this by:**

- Targeted, sustained media campaigns to raise awareness of domestic violence;
- Improving the communication links between the Partnership and the public; and
- Improving communication links between the Ethnic Liaison Group and the Operational Group to ensure the needs of minority ethnic groups are fully considered.

## **DERWENTSIDE CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP**

### **DERWENTSIDE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

The Derwentside Community Safety Strategy does not have a specific theme linked to domestic violence/abuse. This issue is dealt with in the Crime Reduction Section of the Strategy, where the aim is to reduce crime across the district by 15% by 2008.

The number of domestic incidents between partners or family members reported to the police increased by 37% over the audit period from 802 in 2001/2 to 1,097 in 2003/4. Victims of domestic violence, in particular, are encouraged to report incidents; therefore an increase in the number of reports is a reflection of efforts by the partnership to increase the number of recorded incidents. Domestic violence remains largely unreported and it is difficult to get a full picture of the problem using police data. Domestic violence is a key volume violent crime and has been identified as a priority for the partnership.

#### **KEY TARGETS**

A key target for the partnership is to reduce common assault by 20% wounding by 10% by 2008.

Within the crime reduction section of the strategy, the following are identified in relation to domestic violence:

#### **MEASURES**

- The number of incidents of domestic violence reported.
- The number of arrests of perpetrators of domestic violence.
- The number of convictions of perpetrators of domestic violence.

#### **Prevention/Intervention**

- Continue to target harden vulnerable properties.
- Ensuring victims receive adequate information on available support services and safety measures.
- Carrying out targeted and sustained media campaigns to raise awareness.
- Continually monitoring all crime levels and highlighting significant changes to these delivery groups to address.
- Providing support to people most at risk of becoming a victim of crime. Those people that are repeat victims of crime.
- Developing appropriate accommodation and support options for those experiencing domestic violence.
- Ensuring that there is a consistent positive response from all partnership organisations in relation to referrals for domestic violence.
- Working with perpetrators of domestic violence to challenge their attitudes and beliefs.
- Continuing to promote awareness of the issue of domestic violence.

- Improving information sharing in relation to domestic violence between partners.
- Encouraging employers to develop workplace policies in relation to domestic violence.
- Developing policies in relation to the needs of young people as victims, witnesses and perpetrators of domestic violence following an assessment of needs.

## **ENFORCEMENT**

### **We will achieve this by:**

- Working with partners in the Criminal Justice system to ensure that prolific and priority offenders are caught and convicted.
- Using the national intelligence model to identify known offenders, crime hotspots, and develop partnership responses to problems.
- Working with victims to support them as witnesses within the Criminal Justice system.
- Working in partnership to promote early intervention to secure the safety of victims and witnesses.
- Swiftly implementing the Domestic Violence Act.

## **PUBLIC REASSURANCE**

### **The partnership will achieve this by:**

- Working with the victims and witnesses of crime to support and increase public confidence.
- Providing support to prolific and priority offenders to help them break their cycle of offending.
- Providing long-term support to victims and their families.
- Providing programmes for prolific and priority offenders of domestic violence to enable them to break their cycle of offending.
- Seeking to further improve reporting of domestic violence incidents.

## **YOUTH ENGAGEMENT**

### **The partnership will achieve this by:**

- Improving communication links between the Ethnic Liaison Groups and the partnership to ensure the needs of minority ethnic groups are fully considered.
- Improving the quality of communication links between the partnership and the community.
- Having targeted sustained media campaigns to raise awareness of domestic violence.

## **EASINGTON CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP**

In Easington, from Year 1 to Year 3, the total number of incidents of domestic violence (partner and family) recorded by the police reduced by 14%. This reduction equates to

212 less incidents recorded. The number of domestic violence incidents perpetrated by a partner or ex-partner reduced by 10% (117 fewer incidents).

Target for reduction in domestic burglary by 2008 is 25%.

## **TACKLING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

### **AIM**

To increase the number of people accessing domestic violence services.

### **OBJECTIVES**

- To reduce repeat victims of domestic violence.
- To increase the number of successful prosecutions for domestic violence related offences.
- To increase the level of contact between victims of domestic violence and out-reach support services.
- To improve security and safety for victims of domestic violence.
- To reduce the number of assaults across all categories including domestic violence by 10% over the lifetime of the strategy.

### **STRUCTURES AND ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

In East Durham Domestic Violence Forum to co-ordinate support services for women and children affected by domestic violence. Durham Police have a domestic violence strategy which outlines protocols for enforcement actions against perpetrators.

### **PREVENTION/INTERVENTION**

#### **We will:**

- Work to increase the awareness of domestic violence support services including a 24-hour helpline.
- Ensure victims receive adequate information on available support services and safety measures.
- Work with perpetrators of domestic violence to challenge their attitudes and beliefs.
- Develop and support existing accommodation/support options for people experiencing domestic violence.
- Continue to share information between partner agencies such as Probation Officers, Health Visitors etc.
- Support the development of additional floating support services via the countywide supporting people partnership.
- Work towards mainstreaming domestic violence support services within the PCT.
- Support local schools to recognise the impact of domestic violence on children and young people.
- Implement domestic violence workplace strategy across the local authority and local businesses.
- Increase the number of safe access points within the district.

## ENFORCEMENT

### We will:

- Utilise powers of arrest effectively at domestic violence incidents.
- Work with partners in the Criminal Justice System to increase successful prosecutions for domestic violence related offences.
- Work with survivors to support them through the support system.
- Work in partnership to promote early intervention to ensure the safety of victims and witnesses.
- Ensure implementation of the domestic violence act 2004.

## PUBLIC REASSURANCE

### We will:

- Provide long term support for victims and their families.
- Provide support to offenders of domestic violence to help them break their cycle of offending.
- Promote awareness of domestic violence issues and services through sustained media campaigns.
- Improve communication links between the partnership and the public.
- Ensure the needs of the community are met including ethnic minority groups, people with disabilities etc.

## MEASURES

- Number of domestic violence related assaults.
- The number of persons accessing domestic violence out-reach services.
- Number of successful prosecutions for domestic violence related offences.

## Best Value and Local Authorities

- 7.11 Delivery of Domestic Violence Services is measured by a Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) 225 (which replaced the previous BVPI 176). The purpose of BVPI 225 is to assess the overall provision and effectiveness of local authority services designed to help victims of domestic violence and to prevent further domestic violence. The BVPI applies to Metropolitan Authorities, London Boroughs and Unitary Authorities. **County Councils are not included.** The Government rationale for omission of County Councils from the indicator was because of the complexity of the indicator and the difficulty that their inclusion would cause. This ignores the role of County Councils in providing services and does not provide any incentive for Counties to drive up performance in this area.
- 7.12 BVPI 225 is measured as a percentage score of the number of questions (11) to which a local authority can answer yes. These are:

- Has the local authority provided a directory of services to help victims of domestic violence?
- Is there within the local authority area a minimum of one refuge place per ten thousand population?
- Does the local authority employ directly or fund a voluntary sector based domestic violence co-ordinator? (For District Councils of less than 35,000 households, the responsibility for co-ordinating domestic violence can be designated within the job description of an existing senior officer. For District Councils that contribute to a county-wide co-ordinator, see the BVPI definition)
- Has the local authority produced an adopted a multi-agency strategy to tackle domestic violence developed in partnership with other agencies?
- Does the local authority support and facilitate a local multi-agency domestic violence forum that meets at least four times a year?
- Has the local authority developed an information sharing protocol and had it agreed between key statutory partners?
- Has the local authority developed, launched and promoted a “sanctuary” type scheme to enable victims and their children to remain in their own home, where they chose to do so, and where safety can be guaranteed? (For smaller District Councils of less than 35,000 households this can be arranged in partnership with neighbouring authorities)
- Has there been a reduction in the percentage of cases accepted as homeless due to domestic violence that had previously been re-housed in the last two years by that local authority as a result of domestic violence?
- Does the Council's tenancy agreement have a specific clause stating the perpetration of domestic violence by a tenant can be considered grounds for eviction? (For local authorities that have transferred their housing stock, the clause should be contained in the LSVT organisations' tenancy agreement).
- Has the local authority funded and developed a domestic violence education pack in consultation with the wider domestic violence forum?
- Has the local authority carried out a programme of multi agency training in the last twelve months covering front-line and managerial staff in at least two of the following groups: housing staff, social services staff providing services in the local authority area, education staff, health staff and front-line police officers?

## Local Area Agreements

- 7.13 Local Area Agreements (LAAs) are three-year agreements, which set out the priorities negotiated between central government and a local area (in County Durham, the local authorities, LSPs and partners at a local level). LAAs simplify some central funding, help join up public services more effectively and allow greater flexibility for local solutions to local circumstances. Work to tackle domestic violence is the type of cross-cutting initiative that fits within the structure of the LAA framework.
- 7.14 LAAs aim to deliver better outcomes for local people based upon local priorities; offer greater autonomy and devolved decision making; improve central/local relations; simplify central funding and help to pool budgets; join up public services locally and improve partnership working by encouraging partners to support each other in furthering common goals based on a sound knowledge of local people's needs. LAAs are currently structured around four blocks (or policy fields) – children and

young people; safer and stronger communities; healthier communities and older people; and economic development and enterprise. The Agreement includes mandatory outcomes and indicators for each block, which are laid down by central government, as well as other outcomes and indicators which reflect local priorities.

- 7.15 The County Durham LAA recognises domestic violence specifically in the Safer and Stronger Communities Block (Outcome 1), within the PSA1 target for reducing crime, and specifically, in relation to increasing the number of reported domestic violence offences that are brought to justice by 10% over the period 2004/5 to 2008/9.

## Section Eight – Consultation and Engagement Feedback

### Introduction

- 8.1 A key aspect of scrutiny is consultation with stakeholders – those individuals who either receive services or are impacted upon by the issues being scrutinised.
- 8.2 For the purpose of this project, we spoke with or received written evidence from the following groups
- Women residents and staff at Bishop Auckland Women's Refuge
  - Gay Advice Darlington and Durham
  - The Darlington and County Durham Racial Equality Council
  - DISC Young People's Domestic Violence Interest Group
  - Young people in Sedgefield (consultation findings from a young people's research project in Sedgefield Borough, undertaken by Felicity Shenton).

### Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Views

- 8.3 There are particular problems encountered by those in the LGBT community who are experiencing domestic violence. A meeting with representatives from Gay Advice Darlington (GAD) and Bishop Auckland Women's Refuge was held on 23 January 2007 at County Hall, Durham to discuss these issues.
- 8.4 GAD is a charity committed to investing in the Gay Community. It works closely with all local organisations relevant to produce the finest quality service possible. Its members are committed to improving and promoting knowledge, awareness and health issues. GAD has a specialist criminal justice worker to advise and support those members of the LGBT community who may be subject to hate crime or be victims of domestic violence. The Charitable objectives of GAD are:
- To relieve the mental and emotional crises suffered by persons who are homosexual, bisexual or in doubt about their sexuality; or by those who may be involved with such persons; who are living, working or socialising within the area of County Durham and Darlington.
  - To advance the education of the general public and inform and increase the skills of statutory and other agencies and learned professions in assisting and dealing with such people.
- 8.5 Information about Bishop Auckland Women's Refuge and Women's Aid is contained in Sections Five and Six of the report.
- 8.6 The representatives from GAD and Bishop Auckland Women's Refuge raised the following issues concerning domestic violence in the LGBT community during discussions with members of the Working Group:

- **Societal Issues** - Society tends to take a heterosexist view of issues - i.e. domestic violence is only a feature of heterosexual relationships.
- **Domestic Violence involves power and control** - There is a greater span of control in same sex relationships due to the fear by the victim of being “outed”. Some men and women who are subjected to domestic violence may not want to complain or go to Court, for fear of their sexuality being revealed to family, friends or employers. This is particularly noticeable where victims are HIV positive. For lesbians or gay men who have children, there may be additional fears linked to possible loss of access to their children.
- **Recognition of Issues by Public Sector Agencies** - Agencies may not recognise that domestic violence is being perpetrated – i.e. a fight in the street between two men of different names who live at the same address, might not be picked up as a same-sex domestic violence incident by the police; or a woman accompanying another battered woman to a hospital Accident and Emergency Department might be assumed by medical or nursing staff to be friend, whereas she could well be the partner who perpetrated the violence. It was said that specialist domestic violence officers in the police service are aware of the issues, but many police constables are not and there may be training/development issues to address for the police and other public sector workers in this area.
- **Stigmatisation** – Some men and women in same sex relationships may not want to report domestic violence, because they believe it will lead to greater stigmatisation of the LGBT community than currently exists.
- **Policy Issues** –There is a lack of any co-ordinated policy across agencies providing services/support to LGBT victims of domestic violence.
- **Joint Working** - There are some Domestic Violence Forums, which work with LGBT support groups, but many do not, and there is a need for more joined-up working between these forums and LGBT support groups.
- **Assumptions and Beliefs** – There are myths within Society **and** the Gay Community itself about domestic violence in same sex relationships such as:
  - Violence is rarely used when partners are of the same sex.
  - Any violence is a fair fight between equals.
  - Domestic Violence has increased in the gay community due to increased drugs and alcohol use.
- **Psychological damage** – Can be worse in same sex relationships because of:
  - Programming – the victim has been groomed to accept abuse.
  - Lack of support from family members, who may be disapproving.
  - Victim may be isolated and does not know where to go for support.
- **Support** - In comparing provision and support for domestic violence sex victims, the level of provision for the LGBT Community is currently assessed

to be at 1980/1982 levels of provision for heterosexual domestic violence.

- **Mistrust** – There is deep mistrust of the criminal justice system amongst the LGBT community.
- **Complexity** – Same sex relationships can be very complex – i.e. lesbian relationships may involve women who are married with children and have to hide their sexual orientation
- **Stereotyping** - About what constitutes the lesbian community – i.e. butch versus femme; that lesbians are vocal and fight for women’s rights. The reality is that the community is wide.
- **LGBT Community Views** – There are worries that greater publicity about domestic violence in same-sex relationships, or raising awareness might result in a backlash against the LGBT community
- **The LGBT community is an under-served and un-represented community** (by agencies, including the County Council) and there is a need to consult with people in that community about what the community wants and needs.
- **Over 200 incidents of domestic violence per year in the LGBT Community are reported to Gay Advice Darlington and Durham** and this figure is still rising.

### Key Issues – LGBT

8.7 The following key issues were raised:

- There is a need to raise awareness of same sex domestic violence issues across the police, criminal justice system and those other agencies who deal with domestic violence, through more publicity, training and development for employees working in these areas
- Domestic Violence or other relevant Policies and Strategies should include greater recognition of and plan for provision of support to those experiencing domestic violence in same-sex relationships
- Other than in a limited number of studies, there is little information about the extent or impact of domestic violence in same sex relationships. Recording systems and/or analysis of data by agencies in this field needs developing so as to capture this information
- There is a need for better links between Domestic Violence Forums and LGBT community support group representatives
- Understanding of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues may be limited for some Councillors and there may be member development needs in relation to this area, which require to be addressed as part of the wider equalities and diversity agenda of the County Council.

## **Black and Minority Ethnic Views**

- 8.8 Darlington and Durham County Racial Equality Council's Mission Statement is "To work towards the elimination of racial discrimination and to promote the equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups."
- 8.9 The Darlington and Durham County Racial Equality Council representative raised the following issues with the Working Group in connection with domestic violence in BME communities.
- There is little information and no statistics in County Durham or Darlington about the nature or extent of domestic violence in minority communities.
  - There is stereotyping in relation to Muslim men, i.e. as controllers of women, and as being oppressive in how they view and handle women.
  - Where there is domestic violence in marriages/partnerships within the BME community, it is difficult for women to contact support services because they:
    - Cannot speak or read English.
    - Often cannot read in their own language.
    - Have little or no opportunity to talk to friends.
    - May be isolated, living in a relatively closed community
    - Live within a culture and influences which force them to accept the way they are treated
- 8.10 The Working Group was provided with a case study about a young Muslim woman who was a college student and had been concerned about being forced into marriage by her family. She had resisted the proposals but had feared for her life. The difficulties faced by the police and other agencies in providing adequate support for the woman concerned were highlighted in the case study.

### **Key Issues – BME**

8.11 The following key issues were raised:

- There are growing numbers of Eastern European immigrants in County Durham. Literature about access to domestic violence support services needs to be developed for this group.
- The same applies to women from other cultures resident in the County.
- Police Liaison Officers would normally be involved in domestic violence situations which were culturally sensitive, but liaison with minority groups is now passing to civilians or community support officers and there are concerns that this might diminish the service provided.

## Young People's Views

### Sedgefield

- 8.12 Members of the Working Group received a presentation from Felicity Shenton, a consultant who had been funded by County Durham Children's Fund, with additional funding from Sedgefield Borough Council, to undertake research across the Borough about young people's attitudes and experiences of domestic violence. This was the first project to seek the views of children and young people, as others had been undertaken from an adult perspective. More than 266 children and young people participated in a range of activities through workshops and questionnaires delivered to young people in a range of settings. The researcher also undertook a small number of one to one interviews with young people known to be living with domestic violence.
- 8.13 More than 60% of the young people involved in the study knew what domestic violence was, but said they wanted more information. Some felt school was the best place to get information, because all children and young people went to school and there would be no stigma attached to being provided with general information. They also felt that this was something that everyone needed to learn about.
- 8.14 Peer education was mentioned as one possible way of transmitting the information. There were, however differences – children of primary school age wanted to get the information from teachers, but young people of secondary school age were less likely to seek support from teaching staff. Youth clubs, Connexions and the police were mentioned as possible sources of information/support, but the majority of young people did not know where to access help, and many said they would ask or rely upon friends.
- 8.15 As part of the research project, **young people were asked what impact domestic violence had on them**; either in relation to their own personal experiences, or those of friends. They described the impact that domestic violence had on their health, schooling and relationships as follows:
- **Behavioural** – This might include deliberate self-harm; eating disorders, taking drugs and alcohol, suicide, dropping out of school, acting up, bullying or being bullied, being violent towards other people, being withdrawn, not being able to be bothered with anything and running away from home
  - **Emotional outcomes** – This included sadness, stress, worry, embarrassment, feeling there was nothing to live for, feeling misunderstood, being scared, having low self esteem, lack of dignity, anger, frustration, being frightened and feeling unloved and unwanted.
  - **Relationships** – This might include feeling like a punch bag (for boyfriend), turning to religion, not trusting anyone, feeling used, believing that parents no longer cared for them, lack of family contact, no friends, still loving

perpetrators, not being able to tell anyone, jealousy of other people in “normal” families

- **Physical affects** – This included feeling sick, injuries such as black eyes, bruises or broken bones, being unable to breathe/feeling suffocated, feeling drained all the time
- 8.16 The impact on younger children was less obvious. They were often confused, saying they knew things weren't right, but weren't able to tell anyone and, therefore, didn't know what was wrong. **For many young people the biggest issue was having to carry around the burden of what was happening and being afraid to tell anyone, for fear of further violence, of losing their father, or of being taken into care.**
- 8.17 The issues outlined by young people appear to accord with those described by the Working Group by Jo Dawson, the General Manager of CAMHS.
- 8.18 As part of the consultation exercise, young people in Sedgefield were also asked what they wanted to be done to help. Responses were grouped around three main themes:
- (a) **More general information and informal education** – More than 60% of children said they were aware of what domestic violence was, but most wanted more information. Schools scored highly as sources of information, with other sources, such as GP's, nurses, the police, councils and youth centres also mentioned. Most young people said they would want to talk to someone older, but many felt that other young people could also provide information and education.
  - (b) **Access to completely confidential information, advice and support** – The feedback from young people differed between those who were experiencing domestic violence at home and those who were not. There was a real concern on the part of those with problems at home that speaking to teachers or other professionals would result in information being passed on and matters spiralling out of control. **Most of this group simply wanted someone sympathetic to talk to who would listen and believe them in a non-judgemental way.** Young people suggested youth clubs, or young people's health clinics, with services staffed by non-statutory workers who were less 'official' and more accessible to young people. Most young people felt there was little access to support locally and they were most likely to discuss issues with their friends or family.

“I would like to have a worker. I would like to work with someone that I could talk to all the time, an office to sort out your problems and stuff. I want to meet other people like me, with meetings and activities, somewhere to talk and forget.”

Young man aged 14

- (c) **An end to the violence** – There were conflicting views as to what young people wanted. Some young people wanted help to stop what was happening straight away and to be able to flee the violence:

“Housing were useless, it took them 6 months to move my Mum. We had to stay in the same house where she got assaulted until they could move her. It’s too long to be living like that.”

Young man aged 15

Other young people sometimes expressed a slightly different view:

“I want him to stop hurting her, but I don’t want him to go away or into prison or anything.”

Young man aged 8

### **DISC Young Carers Group - Views**

- 8.19 Members of the Working Group met with the DISC young carers domestic violence interest group at County Hall on 7 February 2007. DISC (Developing Initiatives, Supporting Communities) is a charity, which works with disadvantaged, mainly young people. Over 100 young carers are supported in a group, which has been in existence for over 10 years. DISC provides support to 11-18 year olds across County Durham, apart from Easington and Derwentside where Barnado’s provides a service. In relation to support, this can either be following referral of young people by other agencies to DISC, or young people can approach DISC directly for assistance. In both instances an assessment will be undertaken.
- 8.20 Julie Dempsey advised the Working Group that she was the first young carers domestic violence worker and explained that young people didn’t feel that they were being listened to. Many of them had violent parents or siblings and their plight was not sometimes recognised by professional staff (i.e. teachers not understanding why a young person might be frequently late for school). The support provided by DISC to young carers experiencing domestic violence was centred upon coping strategies and anger management. A lot of this was done as group work. There were also opportunities when funding allowed for respite (i.e. camping weekends). The group had a roughly equal gender balance and Julie made the point that men could also be affected by domestic violence perpetrated upon them by women.

8.21 The young carers outlined to members of the Working Group the main types of domestic violence experienced:

- Emotional/psychological abuse – knocking confidence, making family members feel guilty or being threatening/intimidating towards family members
- Financial Control – withholding money from the family, or controlling mobile phone credit to limit contact with family or friends
- Physical abuse – hitting, kicking and punching
- Sexual abuse – rape, sexual assault

There are other types of abuse, such as threatening violence against a family pet or not allowing someone to practice their personal beliefs.

8.22 There are a number of reasons why young people can themselves inflict domestic violence on others:

- They have learned it from their parents/carers
- They think it is normal behaviour
- They are under the influence of drink or drugs
- It is done out of frustration – it can be tough looking after mum, dad or a brother/sister and carers might lash out.

8.23 The young people told the Working Group what they felt should be done in relation to victims and perpetrators

**Victims Needs:**

- Refuges - Although there are problems with age restrictions for young lads, there should be areas of refuges for families with older male children
- A 24-hour phone advice service, phone number 888 - this could be national. It could be advertised on radio, in magazines, school, doctors and youth clubs. It may also shame people into thinking twice about inflicting harm.
- A drop in centre/ one stop shop where people can talk about their problems and get advice and support, but keep things confidential if they want. Children don't like to be singled out at school – they like a safe and confidential environment.
- Additional Domestic Violence workers could help. To visit young people and give them advice and support.
- More consideration from the police in police stations when reporting crimes - maybe a private reception desk where crimes can be reported.
- Prison sentences are not long enough.

**Needs of Perpetrators:**

- Make anger management courses more readily available and advertised. Could access in school, college or One Stop Shop. There are workers in the field who could go into schools to deliver these courses.
- Prison sentences should include some sort of rehabilitation.
- They could use 888 phone line to ask for help and advice.

- More family services for discussion, meeting and mediating, which may result in someone having to leave. Young carers felt it should be the perpetrator that leaves.
- Easy access to counselling through a one-stop shop. There is very little counselling available for women perpetrators; usually it would be through CAMHS.
- Police taking things more seriously when a woman is the perpetrator. May need better guidelines for this.
- Young carers thought that texting information to them about advice and help would be a good way of communicating.
- They thought that it would be good to have local drop in centres where lots of services were provided, as well as counselling, so no one knew why they had gone there.
- The Chair advised that the previous week she had visited the Family Centre in Croydon, which offered excellent facilities, and would like something like this for Durham - however funding was an issue.
- It was suggested that contact numbers for domestic violence services be posted on notice boards in schools.

### **Key Issues – Young Carers**

8.24 The following key issues were raised:

- Need for refuge provision for older male children
- A 24 hour advice line for children and/or texting facilities
- Need for drop in centres/one stop shops for young people to confide and share problems
- More domestic violence workers to work with young people
- More confidentiality in police stations
- Anger management courses for perpetrators, including young people who are abusive (although some research has shown that anger management for abusers may not be appropriate as they are well able to control themselves and it is their attitudes and beliefs that need to be challenged)
- Greater recognition by agencies, including the police, that women can be abusers and that perpetrator courses should also be available to women
- Better publicity about domestic violence support for young people in schools (i.e. on notice-boards)

### **Staff and Residents at Bishop Auckland Women's Refuge**

- 8.25 A visit to Bishop Auckland Women's Refuge took place on 16 February 2007. Members had an opportunity to speak with staff and two of the residents who were present in the refuge during the visit.
- 8.26 Wear Valley Women's Aid is one of the few remaining independent charities still running a refuge. The Bishop Auckland refuge is a large late-Georgian building in

a residential area of Bishop Auckland, not too far distant from the town centre. It was purchased in 1996 with lottery funding. Local residents met the plans for a refuge with considerable opposition in the initial stages, but there are excellent relationships now with local people.

- 8.27 The main source of revenue funding for the ongoing work of the refuge comes from Supporting People by means of an annual contract. Staff explained that this was key to their work. There is some money from other funding streams, as well as housing benefit. The refuge provides accommodation in the form of 6 rooms, and typically, families would share a room. The largest room can accommodate 1 woman and 4 children, and the smallest room can house 1 woman and a child. The maximum age for male children was 16 years (it was said that this was 18 in the Derwentside refuge).
- 8.28 The refuge was clean, well decorated and furnished, with good toilet and shower facilities and a very homely feel to the communal areas of living room and dining room. There was also a communal kitchen and laundry. The women present bought and cooked their own food, although often they might cook communally. Health and safety issues appeared to be well addressed and a fire safety inspection was underway during the visit. There were curfews for the residents (11 to 11.30 p.m.), but this was for health and safety reasons and staff advised that these were negotiable, i.e. where a woman may wish to visit parents for an overnight stay. There was no staff sleepover or overnight cover, but the excellent relationships with local police meant that there was an immediate response in the case of any difficulties. The women present in the refuge operated in an informal concierge role
- 8.29 The women residents whom members of the group spoke with all appeared happy with the accommodation provided. The bedrooms were airy and welcoming and it was apparent that the women and children living there had made them their own. It was noted that women looked out for each other and helped where they could. Reference was made to diversity issues in relation to issues such as food preparation and members were advised that this had not caused any difficulties in the past.
- 8.30 Most women who use a refuge such as Bishop Auckland will have left their partner on average 13 times, before leaving for good. The average stay in the refuge was 3-6 months, if awaiting social housing. It was said that most women would accept whatever was offered to them. The three District authorities served by the refuge – Sedgefield, Wear Valley and Teesdale were all said by staff to provide good support to women residents.
- 8.31 The refuge worked closely with a number of agencies and had support from a local solicitor who held a once a week surgery at the refuge. There were outreach links (with No. 31 and No.75) and close working with Sure Start. The refuge had a designated health worker. The local designated domestic violence police officer visited regularly.

## **Key Issues – Refuges**

8.32 The following key issues were raised:

- The increasing numbers of “bought brides” and asylum seekers from outside the European Union, many of whom do not qualify for support from public funds (such as housing benefits) could place refuges in financial difficulties.
- More needs to be done to raise awareness and develop a more profound understanding of LGBT and BME issues amongst providers – this perhaps could be a requirement of Supporting People funding
- Continuing support from Supporting People for refuges is paramount
- Outreach services and education about domestic violence issues should not just be geographical (i.e. targeted at “sink” estates), but cover communities of interest, such as the work done on awareness-raising within the Women’s Institute.
- There is a need for more standardised and co-ordinated training across agencies.
- Lots of young people are affected by domestic violence, but many less are damaged by it
- There is domestic violence against men – education has a role to play.

## **Section Nine - Best Practice and Value for Money Issues**

### **Introduction**

- 9.1 An important part of any scrutiny project is looking at how local authorities and agencies in other areas are tackling the issues to determine whether there is any best practice that might be considered or adapted for use in our own area.
- 9.2 As part of the project, the following visits were undertaken, or information obtained:
- Attendance by members at the Derwentside Domestic Violence Forum Annual Conference on 11 October 2006.
  - Attendance by members at the 4<sup>th</sup> National Domestic Violence Forum on 15 November 2006 in London.
  - Attendance by members at an Elected Member Workshop at the culmination of the LGA Domestic Violence Project in London on 8 January 2007.
  - A visit by the Chair of the Working Group to The Family Justice Centre, Croydon, on 31 January 2007.
- 9.3 Additionally, Northumbria University was commissioned to undertake research into best practice in order to tackle domestic violence in other local authority areas.

### **Derwentside Domestic Violence Forum**

- 9.4 The Derwentside Domestic Violence Forum annual conference was held on 11 October 2006 at Beamish Hall, near Stanley. The Conference is an annual event and the programme for the 2006 conference consisted of presentations from Erin Pizzey, patron of the Forum; a drama performance from Pro-Act IV; and presentations from Durham Constabulary; the CPS; National Probation Service and Gay Advice Darlington and Durham.
- 9.5 Evidence about the role of the police and CPS and about LGBT issues was taken at separate sessions by the Working Group and is listed elsewhere in the report. The presentation from the Probation Service concerned the Perpetrator Programme and the role of the Probation Service in administering attendance of those who were required to participate in courses following the imposition of orders (typically 2 year community orders) by the Courts. The courses consisted of 25 core sessions of 2 hours duration each together with a pre-session, amounting to 52 hours attendance in total. The main aim of the course was to ensure the safety of women and children. The Gay Advice Darlington and Durham representatives referred to the Perpetrator Programme and asked whether consideration had been given to programmes for those perpetrators in same sex relationships.
- 9.6 The 1-hour theatre style presentation by Pro-Act IV at the commencement of the conference made a significant impact on delegates in conveying the key issues

linked to domestic violence. Members felt that this type of awareness-raising presentation would be valuable in terms of enhancing Councillors' knowledge about the issues.

#### **Fourth National Annual Domestic Violence Conference**

9.7 This conference in association with the national charity, Refuge, was held in London on 15 November 2006. The Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP gave the Keynote address. The programme included presentations about progress with homicide reviews; developing the specialist domestic violence courts programme; focusing on the victim through multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs); providing an accessible and effective police service; ensuring continuing support for domestic violence victims; and effective facilitation of local partnerships through local authorities.

9.8 A number of workshops were also provided; including a number linked to how earlier intervention can reduce domestic violence.

9.9 The following key issues were raised:

- LAAs can provide effective local solutions to local circumstances
- It is important that health participates in MARACs
- There is a need for information sharing protocols in relation to health data (Section 115 of the Crime and Disorder provides powers for the NHS to do so)
- Home visitation programmes targeted at children (such as Sure Start) can help reduce potential child abuse
- Early school interventions – about positive relationships, protective skills for young women and targeting high risk groups of young people (males and female adolescents)
- Alcohol abuse treatment services for male perpetrators and tackling alcohol consumption via CDRPs and LAAs.
- Development of MARACs and ensuring that all agencies are signed up
- Ensuring that Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) are providing a consistent service across the UK
- Ensuring that local authorities are at the heart of any domestic violence partnerships
- Having a champion/leader for domestic violence issues within the Council
- Recognition of the role of the voluntary sector in domestic violence support and provision
- Ensuring that Domestic Violence Forums make a difference
- Looking beyond homicides linked to domestic violence – the numbers of suicides of women resulting from domestic violence far exceed those of homicides.

## **Croydon Family Justice Centre**

- 9.10 Members of the Working Group heard in evidence from the Crown Prosecution Service about a new initiative in Croydon, the Family Justice Centre, which is based upon a model developed in the United States. The Chair of the Working Group visited Croydon Family Justice Centre on 31 January 2007.
- 9.11 The Centre first opened its doors in December 2005 and was developed in partnership with the San Diego Family Justice Center (the international model of excellence on domestic violence) and the New York Family Justice Center. The Croydon Centre is an initiative between Croydon Council, Croydon Police and Croydon Primary Care Trust. The Council, Police and other agencies will fund all salary costs of existing staff from local authority and partner agencies, but additional funding will be needed to support other costs of the Centre. The Centre is the first of its kind in Europe.
- 9.12 Family Justice Centres, such as that at Croydon, aim to bring together under one roof all those services to help victims, which previously have been scattered throughout the community. In the Croydon Family Justice Centre, victims of abuse and their families have access to a unique collaboration of resources including medical and legal services, police officers, probation officers, doctors, counsellors, advocates, social workers, housing providers, benefits advice, education providers, children's services and adult education groups. People from the Borough statutory agencies and over 40 community based organisations, faith based organisations and Croydon colleges provide support at the Centre. With only one visit, victims can meet with solicitors, receive legal advice, advice on housing, talk to counsellors and apply for crisis, financial or safe housing assistance – all whilst their children play safely.
- 9.13 The Croydon Centre provides a full range of social, welfare, economic, safety, accommodation, criminal and civil justice needs of individuals living with or escaping from abuse. It will also offer links to Family, Criminal and a new Domestic Violence Integrated Court.
- 9.14 The Centre shares an office building in central Croydon with a number of other tenants. This means that victims of abuse who visit the Centre are not identified as specifically attending the Family Justice Centre. The Centre is expected to provide support to more than 7,000 victims and 14,000 children each year.

## **Best Practice – Research by Northumbria University**

- 9.15 The briefing paper prepared by Glenn Simpson of Northumbria University highlighted best practice among local authorities in dealing with the problem of domestic violence. The paper explained that domestic violence is a policy area, which by its nature is a cross-cutting issue and which also requires a co-ordinated inter-agency approach among key agencies such as the police, probation service, housing authorities, health, social and family support services, the voluntary and charitable sector and private sector bodies. As a result domestic violence is an issue that requires a complex, varied and often long-term policy response.

- 9.16 Local authorities have a key role to play, alongside other agencies, in tackling domestic violence by safeguarding survivors, offering services to reduce the impact of the abuse and holding perpetrators to account. **As the Local Government Association (LGA) points out “...work to tackle domestic violence is part of local authorities' core business - not an optional extra”.** Councils contribute to tackling this issue in three broad areas:
- input into local partnerships;
  - their corporate response;
  - through direct service provision.
- 9.17 With the possible exception of housing provision and advice, most of the work undertaken by local government in this field is essentially **complementary** to the activities of the voluntary sector, criminal justice bodies and other key public service providers.
- Community alarm systems;
  - Sanctuary projects;
  - Zero tolerance approaches;
  - Education and schools;
  - Refuges;
  - Multi-agency strategies;
  - Housing and accommodation issues;
  - Domestic violence and children in rural areas.
- 9.18 The following paragraphs in this Section highlight a range of local authority best practice covering the many different facets of domestic violence. Many of these examples relate to the questions local authorities must answer as part of Best Value Performance Indicator 225, which aims to assess the overall provision and effectiveness of local authority services designed to help victims of domestic violence. It should be noted, as previously stated in this report, that BVPI 225 does not cover County Councils.

### **Guidance and information packs on domestic violence**

- 9.19 Islington Council produced a Good Practice Guide setting out a **council-wide standard approach** and **detailed guidance** for those working in housing, social services, education and other relevant departments. The council-wide approach includes believing what a woman says, ensuring her safety, confidentiality, anti-discriminatory practice and the right to see a woman member of staff.
- 9.20 The London Borough of Greenwich has produced *Tackling Domestic Violence: Greenwich Resource and Information Pack*, which is a **comprehensive reference pack**. It was first produced in 1998 and is now in its sixth edition. The pack draws on material produced elsewhere and new material developed during multi-agency training. It includes sections on the law, housing, health, refuges, welfare rights, immigration, children, work with perpetrators and multi-agency working, as well as discussion materials, a booklist and a wide-ranging section on agency contact details. Updating the pack has proven to be a constant challenge, with local and national agencies being contacted by the domestic

violence co-ordinator to check relevant sections. Each year over half the entries in the list of agencies require some changes.

### Effective training

- 9.21 Greenwich Council runs '**Training the Trainers' courses** with both council staff and those from outside organisations such as the voluntary sector. These trainers then go on to develop multi-agency training courses organised by Greenwich Multi-Agency Domestic Violence Forum. Over 90 participants, from over 30 agencies, were recently trained in a 12-month period.
- 9.22 The **Coventry Domestic Violence Partnership (CDVP)** was initially set up in 1990, with funding coming from Coventry City Council. The funding pays for a domestic violence co-ordinator. In 2001, CDVP commissioned research into current provision and future requirements for domestic violence training in both statutory and voluntary organisations. The results showed **a need for domestic violence awareness training** and, as a result, a multi agency training project was established. The CDVP training project is managed by the domestic violence co-ordinator, and employs a full-time training officer and part-time clerk. The project has been funded by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, although this ceased in 2005. The CDVP has developed a business plan to sustain the project in the long term. The project has provided free training for hundreds of front line staff across statutory and voluntary agencies, having developed two core modules: *raising awareness* and *developing skills*. It has also developed hot topics, including cultural awareness, drugs and alcohol and mental health. To support delivery of its training modules the project has produced a DVD/video: *Scars of a quiet denial*. This training resource is now available for purchase nationally.
- 9.23 Coventry believes that to develop a successful project, partnerships need to:
- gain commitment from key stakeholders at a senior level as early as possible, through raising awareness of the impact of domestic violence on their individual agency;
  - identify the level of local demand for training at an operational level within a wide range of agencies, and consider how to balance the recognised benefits of multi-agency training with the need to respond to agencies specific training needs;
  - ensure that evaluation processes have been built into the training project from the start;
  - consider the implications of non-attendance at training events, often due to conflicting demands on front-line staff;
  - undertake long-term planning - to ensure sustainability, partnerships need to consider the resource planning cycles of the various potential funding stakeholders.
- 9.24 Bath and North East Somerset Partnership Against Domestic Violence **provides multi-agency training on domestic violence and abuse awareness**. It has also offered training to the local child protection committee, to extend awareness of the impact and needs of children and young people affected by domestic violence. The partnership also organises lunchtime seminars every few months,

which are given by researchers in various specialist fields. This programme will continue with an update on the new legislation, the role of schools in supporting children and guidelines for working with survivors who misuse drugs or alcohol and/or have severe mental health problems. The partnership sees training as an important plank in its strategy to improve effective multi-agency working, increase protection and improve support. They have identified the following as key components of effective training delivery:

- partnerships should devise and implement a training strategy to ensure that all relevant staff receive training (rather than leaving it up to individual interest);
- 'relevant staff' includes both front-line staff and managers, and organisations should monitor the take-up of training;
- in terms of training content, basic training should focus on awareness raising, with further training in more specialist areas only offered once basic awareness training has been undertaken;
- training should be delivered by two experienced practitioners and should, where possible, include input from local support agencies;
- knowledge and skills development should be evaluated both during the course and at appropriate intervals after the training event.

9.25 The London Borough of Camden, Camden & Islington Health Authority, Camden Multi-agency Domestic Violence Forum and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine have set up a local health partnership on domestic violence. This partnership has developed a ***pilot project to test the use of domestic violence guidelines and training for health professionals*** in England. The three-year project will train staff in obstetrics and gynaecology, accident and emergency and in the primary health care sector. Trained staff routinely ask all women, in the absence of their partner, about domestic violence and provide advice and information on local services.

9.26 In terms of general good practice on staff training and guidance, many local authorities produce detailed policy and procedural guidance on domestic violence for housing staff. In addition, some local authorities provide guidance for conducting interviews and also provide training for housing officers in domestic violence issues. Examples of good practice guidance provided for housing officers in this area include:

- ensuring the safety of the person who is fleeing domestic violence;
- responding sympathetically to the applicant;
- believing the applicant and never asking for proof of violence;
- being non-judgemental; and
- maintaining confidentiality.

### **Effective multi-agency responses**

9.27 Research by Hague and Malos (1996) on inter-agency initiatives as a response to domestic violence found that:

- Inter-agency responses often take the form of forums bringing together all relevant statutory and voluntary sector agencies. There are at least 200 forums nationally.
- Initiatives develop differently depending on local conditions. There is *no one model*. In some areas, informal liaison can be as effective as more formal approaches.
- Statutory agencies vary in their involvement. The police have been particularly active in encouraging forums.
- There can be a tendency for statutory agencies to *dominate* groups at the expense of voluntary agencies.
- Participants from Women's Aid and the refuge movement were particularly likely to be *marginalised*, as most of their energies are devoted to emergency work.
- Women and children experiencing domestic violence rarely know about or are involved in inter-agency initiatives.
- *Lack of resources* is the single biggest obstacle to multi-agency co-ordination. Where resources were lacking, inter-agency work could appear as a way forward, while in fact nothing really changed.
- Where resources were available employing a co-ordinator frequently *transformed* the initiative. However, there was concern that resources should not be diverted from emergency provision.

9.28 In addition, the research showed that those involved in inter-agency responses to domestic violence need to be aware of:

- the ways that well-developed forums prevent the views, policies and practices of voluntary agencies being overlooked or diluted;
- evolving new practice which ensures that women and children are involved;
- fully involving participants from Women's Aid and the refuge movement;
- the danger of forums taking on too much at once or getting stuck at the networking phase.

9.29 Leeds Inter-Agency Project (Women and Violence) was established in 1990 to develop a ***multi-disciplinary approach*** to improving the safety of women and their children from violent men. The project supports partner agencies to provide more appropriate and sensitive services to women and their children. This is achieved through training, monitoring and policy/practice development. Work is being undertaken in a number of areas including:

- piloting multi-agency good practice initiatives;
- work with disabled women experiencing violence;
- work with civil and criminal justice agencies;
- work with children witnessing or experiencing violence;
- piloting work in schools;
- initiatives in health and social care agencies.

The project offers training and consultancy on a national and international basis and is committed to sharing good practice with other multi-agency groups.

## The work of inter-agency forums in tackling domestic violence

9.30 **Norwich's Violence Against Women Forum** is an inter-agency group addressing rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment and domestic violence. The Forum meets on a quarterly basis and is facilitated by Norwich City Council. It aims to raise awareness and improve the response of local agencies to women and children experiencing violence. Membership includes the police, health authority, social services, victim support, probation service, women's refuge, rape crisis, a family lawyer's group, the education department and local women's organisations.

9.31 **East Cambridgeshire District Domestic Violence Forum** was established in 1999 as an independent body working closely with all the key local agencies and the CDRP. The introduction of the Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) on domestic violence provided an opportunity for East Cambridgeshire District Council to work even more closely with the forum. The list of questions underpinning the BVPI has been used to formulate a new action plan. Some of the initiatives in the indicator are already underway locally but many are not. This means that the district and its partners need to work together on areas such as producing a strategy, agreeing an information sharing protocol and producing a directory of services. Some of this work is carried out by the *Countywide Domestic Violence Steering Group* where all district forums are represented. This approach minimises duplication and enables some of the rural authorities to work together to deliver local multi-agency training for front-line staff.

9.32 **South Gloucestershire's Domestic Violence Forum** works within the framework of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP). It receives the majority of its funding via the CDRP with its individual strategy feeding into the wider CDRP strategy. However, it retains a degree of independence with a chair elected from the voluntary sector. The local domestic violence co-ordinator works very closely with the forum, agreeing an annual work programme with them. The forum meets quarterly and has over 40 members, including strategists and practitioners who represent a mix of statutory and voluntary sector agencies. The forum's key objectives are to:

- reduce the incidence of domestic violence in South Gloucestershire;
- ensure high quality service provision and a sensitive and consistent response to all those reporting domestic violence and their families;
- ensure all agencies work together to provide a co-ordinated approach to domestic violence service provision.

The forum's work programme includes: co-ordinating support for women and children, awareness raising and training.

9.33 **Cheshire Domestic Abuse Partnership** was formally set up December 1997. It aims to:

- provide a forum for effective on domestic violence and abuse in order to improve the safety of those affected, more usually women and children;

- seek to highlight and address the disadvantage and social exclusion which often follow as a result of domestic violence.

9.34 The partnership has achieved a number of outcomes:

- Information for professionals and leaflets;
- Training programme since 1998 (2000 multi-agency staff trained: two levels);
- Women's aid and refuges informing agenda;
- Trained multi-agency trainers;
- Linking to probation and NSPCC Perpetrator programme;
- Home Office Crime Reduction Programme -Violence Against Women.

9.35 Factors that have underpinned effective partnership working in Cheshire include:

- Councillors raising the issue in 1997 and their involvement;
- Experience and expertise of Women's Aid Central;
- Enthusiasm and trust of partnership members;
- CDAP members who reflect the local boroughs and Crime and Disorder Partnerships; as well as countywide agencies and groups;
- Influencing the wider strategic agenda;
- GAPS in service addressed by a Home Office project, that was informed by research and evidence based practice.

9.36 The partnership has enjoyed a number of 'successes':

- All projects interlinked and giving each other added value.
- Domestic violence seen as central to the community planning agenda: Crime and Disorder, LSP and Cheshire Community Strategy)
- Understood as critical to health inequalities and social exclusion agenda and in local preventative planning for children;
- Needs of children living with domestic violence are clear from the data gathered.

9.37 Future development work for the partnership may include:

- Increase the number of agencies involved in data sharing and increase input by the agencies already involved;
- Engage more with GP practices and A&E departments (for early warning signs);
- Explore mental health issues in light of 'Women's Mental Health – into the mainstream' agenda;
- To explore idea of multi-agency action at a local level in severe repeat incidents, e.g. ASBO model;
- A voluntary perpetrator programme;
- Provision needed for CPS to be more involved in CDAP – in light of new CPS domestic violence policy;
- To extend work already done with magistrates and judges locally, in relation to sentencing and contact;
- Training for employers on good practice.

- 9.38 ***Against Domestic Violence and Abuse*** is the recently adopted name and image for the Devon Domestic Violence Partnership. This was set up in November 2002 to bring together the statutory and voluntary agencies within the county to tackle the problem of domestic violence. Its two primary aims are:
- To increase the level of reporting of domestic violence;
  - To reduce the level of repeat victimisation.
- 9.39 Since the launch of the partnership strategy in November 2002, considerable work has been done on reducing the impact of domestic violence within Devon. This has been helped by the establishment of a ***multi-agency pooled budget*** which has enabled the following services and projects to take place:
- Women's outreach support service in each district;
  - Free phone helpline for male victims;
  - Pilot community based programme for male perpetrators;
  - One day training course delivered to 1,000 workers across all agencies;
  - Two day specialist course for people working with children;
  - Trialling of a one day course on Domestic Violence in Lesbian, Gay Bi-sexual and Transgender relationships;
  - Intervention programmes for children living with domestic violence;
  - Children's support worker in North Devon;
  - Publicity and awareness materials for schools and youth settings to raise awareness;
  - Production and trialling of curriculum materials in schools aimed at developing healthy relationships;
  - Research to identify the educational, social and emotional impact on children who live with domestic violence;
  - Awareness and publicity materials and campaigns to raise awareness about domestic violence and encourage those affected by it to seek help.
- 9.40 ***Hackney Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership*** audited sex-related crimes and domestic violence as part of their overall approach to crime and disorder. To tackle domestic violence, the partnership is committed to:
- a crimes of violence action plan;
  - domestic violence reduction programme;
  - public awareness programme;
  - repeat victimisation programme;
  - borough risk management panel;
  - programmes for repeat violence offenders;
  - survivors of domestic violence support programme.

### **Local authority corporate domestic violence policies**

- 9.41 In 1994 Norwich City Council adopted a ***corporate policy*** on '***opposing violence against women***'. This policy applies to all departments who were asked to take whatever action they could to promote it. These actions included:

- appropriate lighting, design and maintenance of public spaces;
- safety procedures for female staff;
- use of CCTV cameras;
- taking advantage of opportunities to measure and highlight violence in the development of initiatives;
- guiding women to support services;
- procedures for dealing with sexual harassment of staff and members of the public.

9.42 Oxford City Council Housing Services Department have **reviewed their domestic violence policy and procedures** and have identified the level of service response which local agencies and the public can expect. Current service provision includes:

- Oxford domestic alarms scheme;
- domestic violence and housing steering group;
- domestic violence housing support post (currently under review);
- legal advice.

9.43 In March 2005, the department held an event 'housing provision for domestic violence survivors' for local agencies publicised through the International Women's Festival Programme. The aim was to provide information about the range of housing options available to domestic violence survivors and to gain a common understanding of how different housing providers respond. Each agency was asked to consider the relevant issues for their agency and how they can work together. As well as examining agency responses for survivors in all housing tenures, the event paid particular attention to meeting the housing needs of black and other minority ethnic domestic violence survivors, and supporting children affected by domestic violence. The event highlighted several key issues for the steering group to address:

- the need for domestic violence support workers;
- problems caused by cuts to Supporting People funding;
- lack of provision for refugees, asylum seekers and women with no recourse to public funds;
- the need for the district councils to work more closely with registered social landlords to develop consistent policy and practices;
- the need for increased resources to be allocated to 'target hardening initiatives' – although it was recognised that there will always be some cases where the perpetrators are so dangerous that the survivor has to move.

9.44 As one of the major employers within Devon and wanting to **set a good practice example** as a community leader, the **county council** agreed a human resources policy on domestic violence. This focuses on the impact domestic violence can have in the workplace in terms of reduced productivity, absenteeism and general staff welfare. To back up the policy and test the levels of understanding and scale of domestic violence within Devon County Council's (DCC) workforce, a questionnaire survey was undertaken. This was only able to reach the 6,325

employees who are on the internal email system and elicited 1,567 responses, from which some of the key findings were:

- 26.7% had been or still were victims of domestic violence, which would translate into 6,333 victims across the entire DCC workforce. This level may surprise some people but is in fact in line with nationally researched prevalence levels.
- Work colleagues suffer as a consequence of others domestic violence with 11.1% indicating this as a factor - equating to 2,609 staff.
- Survivors of domestic violence experience an impact on their work from: low self-esteem; low energy; loss of concentration; time off sick; poor quality of work; working overtime; reduced career development; adverse affect on job prospects; conflicts with managers; conflicts with work colleagues; loss of confidence; withdrawn; depression, tiredness; and lack of motivation.

9.45 Staff welcomed DCC bringing domestic violence to their attention; the survey generating a positive awareness-raising experience. The majority of staff felt that DCC has a responsibility to deal with the issues domestic violence raises, for both victims and perpetrators, within its employment. The results of the survey were examined in detail to identify implications for the roll out and implementation of the staff policy. It is hoped this will result in wider dissemination of the policy with training and support given to managers on how to deal with domestic violence as it manifests within the workplace.

#### **Domestic violence survivors panel and one-stop-shop**

9.46 The London Borough of Croydon has set up a ***panel of domestic violence survivors*** to advise the inter-agency domestic violence forum. The panel played a key role in initiating and developing Croydon's One-Stop-Shop Service that provides an integrated service to survivors of domestic violence. Members of the panel operate a 'friends' system to provide support to women coming forward to the One-Stop-Shop for help.

#### **Practical information dissemination methods on violence against women**

9.47 A range of information dissemination methods have been adopted by local authorities:

- Greenwich Council has sources of help printed on the back of council car park tickets.
- Brent Council circulates community safety key rings with main contact numbers to the public.
- Hackney Council has information about services printed on rent books of council tenants.
- Richmond Council puts hard-to-remove information stickers in public and pub toilets.
- Chester Domestic Violence Initiative has a fold-out pocket-sized leaflet providing services' contact numbers.

- Hackney Domestic Violence Forum produced a directory of contacts known as *Domestic Violence: A Directory for Service Providers*, detailing local services.

### Community alarm systems

- 9.48 **Norwich County Council 'Linkline'** is a partnership between Norwich City Council, the police and other support agencies. It provides a domestic violence linkline, which taps into the community alarm system run by the housing department. Women are supplied with a pendant they can wear around their necks and a panic button on their telephone. When the woman presses the button a signal is sent to a control room operator who immediately alerts the police that there is a 'Grade 1' emergency call, while recording everything that is happening in the home.
- 9.49 **Forest of Dean District Council** funds the Tunstall Telephone alarm unit (linkline) and Victim Support assists with monitoring costs. Victim Support decides if it is appropriate to provide an alarm unit and will install it as well as offer emotional and practical help. If the alarm is activated, the Council linkline takes the call. If a password is not given within 30 seconds, they call the police on 999. The linkline is left open until the police arrive at the address and all calls are taped.
- 9.50 In the **South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council** area, ten witness protection dispersed alarm units' work in conjunction with community alarm systems administered by the Northumbria police. These are used for witness protection and cases of domestic violence.

### Sanctuary projects

- 9.51 **London Borough of Croydon's Sanctuary Project** provides practical help for those who have escaped from an abusive relationship by installing new security measures, such as reinforced doors, new locks and camera door-entry systems. The project was set up in partnership with the police and domestic violence support agencies, helping those who have taken legal action against an aggressive partner. It is only available to those who are already in contact with local support agencies. Tenants with sanctuary works are listed with the police for an urgent response, so any incidents at these known properties will be met with an immediate response.
- 9.52 The project is fast becoming a key part of Croydon's homelessness strategy, with local statistics showing that the number of people forced to leave their homes because of domestic violence was growing. In the year up to April 2004, more than 150 people contacted the council after fleeing domestic violence and since April a further 66 became homeless because of abuse. As well as helping victims feel more secure in their own homes, the sanctuary project reduces the chance that these people will be made homeless.
- 9.53 **East Staffordshire Borough Council sanctuary scheme** was set up in October 2004 and is a partnership between the council, Stoneham Housing Association

(Kiaura Project) and South Derbyshire Council for Voluntary Service (CVS). The rationale behind the project is to allow those who have suffered domestic violence to stay in their own homes, rather than go through the stress and stigma of becoming homeless and having to move away from the area they currently live in. The scheme secures the victim's property so that they can return in the knowledge that the perpetrator has been removed and cannot get access. The scheme was introduced because over the previous two years there had been a significant increase in victims coming from social housing tenancies. Domestic violence was the main reason for homelessness in the borough. Although the scheme has assisted 27 victims to date, it has come across a significant problem in that it has been unable to achieve one of its key aims: *changing locks*. The reason for this is that all the victims who have come forward are owner-occupier households where there is joint ownership of the property. This has prompted the council to re-evaluate how the project can now be used, in particular how it can work with the police and CPS to help *owner-occupiers*. One positive outcome is that the media attention from the launch of the project has highlighted the work of the Kiaura Project. Subsequently it has increased the number of victims it helps three-fold.

- 9.54 The London Borough of Harrow has set up a scheme providing ***additional security for victims of domestic violence***, enabling victims to remain in their own homes where safety can be guaranteed and where they wish to do so. The scheme operates in conjunction with the police and the local domestic violence forum. Police attending incidents offer the service where appropriate, together with an outreach worker from Women's Aid to talk them through various options. The scheme is voluntary and available to women living in any tenure. Crime prevention officers make recommendations for suitable safety measures for their home, which are carried out quickly to retain the client's confidence. As well as installing new or extra locks and lighting, a 'secure sanctuary' is created by converting a bedroom into a safe room with reinforced doors and bolts. Personal alarms and police mobile phones are also included.

### **Zero tolerance approaches**

- 9.55 Some of the best examples of so-called 'public attitude campaigns' are those which advocate 'zero tolerance'. These campaigns aim to change societal attitudes to violence against women.
- 9.56 ***Edinburgh City Council*** launched the UK's first Zero Tolerance campaign in November 1992. Zero Tolerance (ZT) uses mass media to raise awareness of domestic violence, rape and child sexual abuse. ZT's approach is based on prevention of crimes of violence against women, provision of quality services and appropriate and effective legal protection for women and children experiencing violence. There have been a number of evaluations of local campaigns. A critical factor in the success of these campaigns is whether they are located in an effective multi-agency response from key agencies.
- 9.57 ***Chester City Council*** is one of over 50 across the UK supporting a ZT campaign which is raising awareness about the extent and nature of violence against women and children and exploring why violence happens. Chester's ZT materials aim to dispel common myths such as 'stranger danger' by using domestic

locations in their posters. They also convey the message that violence against women and children is a crime. Chester is using a variety of media including widespread distribution of posters, advertising on buses, training, exhibitions and newspaper and radio coverage.

- 9.58 **Gloucestershire's six Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships** are joining together with the Domestic Violence Support and Advocacy Project to promote a zero tolerance of domestic violence. Stark posters featuring flowers placed on a gravestone, displaying the message: "*He beat her 50 times. She never rang the Police. He bought her flowers once*" – appeared across the county during November - December 2006. The campaign, supported by Gloucester Rugby Club, carries a hard-hitting message that domestic violence will not be tolerated. A *fast track court* is being developed in the county to ensure that perpetrators will be swiftly brought to justice. Gloucestershire Constabulary takes domestic violence very seriously and officers do not necessarily need a victim's statement to prosecute perpetrators.

## Education and schools

- 9.59 In 2002, Westminster Domestic Violence Forum, guided by the Phoenix survivors group, produced a **pack for schools on domestic violence prevention**. The pack was five years in development and includes a wide range of activities for young people of all ages linked to national curriculum requirements. This work started in secondary schools but has now been extended to reach primary school children. This was seen as important because behaviours are often set before children reach secondary school. The programme includes INSET training days for the whole school staff, followed up by more in-depth training for nominated teachers. The pack itself includes activities on dealing with conflict, building friendships, supporting someone who is being treated badly, and how boys and girls should treat one another. The materials are recommended in the NUT domestic violence guidelines and won the Domestic Violence Forum an award in 2003 for outstanding and innovative work. The pack includes four sections:

- what is domestic violence;
- why take the issue into schools;
- links with PSHE and other curriculum requirements;
- 50 activities to use in the classroom with young people of all ages.

- 9.60 In the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, the 'Education for Respect Project' was established to **raise school's capacity to respond** appropriately to the needs of children and young people experiencing domestic violence and to pilot preventative approaches as part of the curriculum. Initially, a multi-agency steering group was established and needs assessment carried out to look at how schools currently deal with domestic violence and identify the support they need to address the issue more effectively. It was found that primary schools were more likely to receive disclosures from pupils and parents, and tended to address domestic violence as a child protection issue, but did not explicitly address the issue within the curriculum. Schools welcomed the possibility of training and support. In addition, a questionnaire distributed to pupils in years 7-12 at one secondary school showed that 35 per cent knew someone who had experienced

domestic violence. Pupils overwhelmingly said that domestic violence was a subject they would like to learn more about at school. Three schools participated in a pilot programme taking a 'whole school' approach. This involved training for teaching and support staff, whole school and year assemblies, English, drama and PSHE lessons, and a poster and poetry competition. A variety of teaching methods and materials were used, including the Westminster Domestic Violence Forum schools pack, Womankind Worldwide materials and the Zero Tolerance Trust Respect pack. Guidelines were produced giving schools detailed information on responding to pupils affected by domestic violence and incorporating domestic violence into the curriculum. The School Library Service also compiled a selection of teaching resources for use in schools. Finally, the Education Social Work Service was trained in domestic violence issues to enable them to support school staff in responding to concerns about pupils.

- 9.61 In Stoke-on-Trent the '*relationships without fear programme*' provides young people with the opportunity to **explore attitudes and beliefs which may contribute to abusive relationships**. It encourages young people to look at rules and boundaries, examine early warning signs as well as providing information on where to go for help and support. The programme looks at different forms of abuse and stereotyping. In doing so it aims to empower young people to be confident and to avoid or address abusive relationships. It equips educators to raise issues surrounding domestic violence. *Relationships without fear* is designed so that it can be adapted to meet the individual requirements of schools or other settings. It follows a progressive reinforcement from year groups 4-11 building as the children move through the school. It is also mapped to aspects of the PSHCE and other curriculum subjects. Delivery is carefully monitored. This approach has proved extremely successful both in affecting a positive attitudinal change to domestic violence by young people as well as impacting on health and education outcomes. Because of this, it became the first project to be put forward for mainstream funding through the Joint Commissioning Unit in April 2004.
- 9.62 To build sustainability and cost effectiveness, the programme has evolved from being purely a direct delivery project to adopting a whole school approach. Basic awareness and information training is offered to all staff, while key staff are identified and trained to implement the programme. Experienced domestic abuse professionals offer on-going support to school staff and monitor delivery as well as providing individual support for pupils through a dedicated **children and young persons support worker**. Additional support is in place through multi-agency links. Later this year a new manual for secondary year groups will be launched, followed by the primary programme. This approach is recommended in the Home Office research study: *Tackling domestic violence: effective interventional and approaches*, February 2005.
- 9.63 Bridgend Domestic Abuse forum has undertaken education on domestic violence. The aim of this work is to **raise awareness and to change attitudes** which include in some cases a casual acceptance of the situation towards domestic violence, and in particular to underline to young persons and others the unacceptability of any form of domestic violence and to ensure that those seeking assistance know where to go to access that help. The Bridgend

Domestic Abuse forum raises awareness and seeks to alter attitudes to the issues of domestic violence among three main target groups:

**1) Young Persons including:**

- a) All year 11 pupils in B.C.B.C. Schools (1556)
- b) All young Persons involved with YOT's

**2) Professional groups including:**

- a) Magistrates and Magistrates Clerks
- b) Teachers
- c) Health Visitors

**3) Interest Groups including:**

- a) Parc Prison/ Prison Officer
- b) Tenants and Residents
- c) Parent/ Governor Groups

9.64 These aims will be achieved by:

- Undertaking a *survey* aimed at assessing the knowledge and attitude of pupils to the issue of Domestic Violence. This will assist in the assessment and evaluation of the outcomes of the project, showing as it will, the changes in attitude to, and acceptance of, domestic violence within the home.
- The commissioning and development of a *drama vehicle* aimed at highlighting the issues associated with domestic violence and raising awareness of both sexes in schools. *Live performances* will be given in local schools targeting year 11 pupils. The education service have already confirmed their commitment to the project being undertaken as part of the Personal and social education curriculum.
- Undertaking a series of *workshops* following the production of the play to evaluate the changes of attitude and awareness that the play has raised, by making comparisons with the previously commissioned questionnaire.
- Developing and delivering of *follow up workshops*, which will include the comparison of the information within the survey and the attitudes and awareness levels following the viewing of the play.
- *Training* will be available for teachers who will be undertaking the follow up workshops and who will be responsible for referral procedures. The production will be filmed and the resultant *video* used to widen the audience to include other schools, professional groups and interest groups. The video and workshop material will be offered to other local authorities and interest groups in order to widen the campaign of awareness raising and attitude changing.

Members of the domestic violence forum include: the County Borough Council, YMCA, DASH, BCBC Education services, Victim Support.

- 9.65 The local education authority in Coventry is undertaking a programme of **awareness-raising among teachers** on domestic violence. This is done through sessions with primary and secondary school teachers.

## Refuges

- 9.66 Three of the four refuges in Cheshire have **24-hour helplines** (the other has this facility during office hours only). If they are full they use the national network to locate an alternative space in another refuge. This means that emergency accommodation is usually accessible and women are never left without help and support of some kind to respond to immediate need. All the refuges are affiliated to Women's Aid, the national charity working to end domestic violence. This gives them access to information, advice and training on policy and practice. The four Cheshire refuges, whose work is funded primarily by Supporting People with contributions from the Children's Fund, social services department and district councils, are part of the Cheshire Domestic Abuse Partnership.
- 9.67 Brighton and Hove City Council covers a population of 250,000, meaning that the current provision of 40 bed spaces (including for children) meets the recommended ratio. The Women's Refuge Project has been providing services for women and children affected by domestic violence in Brighton and Hove for over 10 years. These include a refuge, helpline and outreach services. In March 2004, a new **purpose-made refuge was built**. This refuge has self-contained units, one of which is specifically designed for disability needs (wheelchair access, counter weight, equipped bathroom, etc.) The existing refuge was then refurbished to provide accommodation and facilities for women who have 'low to medium' mental health needs such as severe depression, agoraphobia, self-harming and paranoid schizophrenia (provided it is being adequately managed by support and medication). This refuge has been specially designed to provide the *intensive support* that is not available in the more independent living structure of the main refuge. Local women residents seeking refuge provision are carefully assessed as to whether it would be appropriate to house them in the city. This means that women living in Brighton can access the refuge provided:
- the immediate area she has been living in is at some distance from the refuge in another part of the city;
  - there are not children in any of the local schools that could place her at risk;
  - and, the perpetrator is not identified as having stalking behaviours and therefore likely to go to lengths to track her down.
- 9.68 Other residents come from around the UK, either through Women's Aid, other local authority social services and housing departments and self-referrals coming through the police. This project has been undertaken in partnership with Chichester Diocese Housing Association (CDHA), who designed and built the new refuge, and Brighton and Hove City Council, where the Supporting People Programme funds the Women's Refuge Project in the region of £120,000.
- 9.69 **Relationships between refuges and housing authorities** are crucial. A study for the Economic and Social Research Council found that relations between most housing authorities and refuges were 'very good', with fewer than 10% of refuges

saying they were 'bad'. Most local authorities consult refuges at least occasionally about policy and practice issues, liaise 'often' over individual women and regularly refer women to refuges. A quarter of refuges said they usually arrange for housing officers to interview women at the refuge. They also frequently provide officer training. Indeed, one of the most significant findings of the research concerns the key role of **refuges in mediating women's access to social housing** - most evident in their role as advocates for individual women. They often make the initial contact with the housing department and arrange appointments. Some refuges have arrangements for housing officers to visit the refuge on a regular basis to interview women, and they often accompany women to interviews in the housing department. They confer the status of 'genuine case' on women in refuges, and challenge officers both in interview and afterwards. Refuges act as a go-between following an interview and before a decision is made, keeping women informed, explaining what is going on and, where necessary, acting as an irritant to officers to ensure that they do their job. In addition, they 'challenge' decisions taken by councils.

### Multi-agency strategies

- 9.70 The Leeds domestic violence strategy aims to reduce the level and impact of domestic violence across the city. Delivering the strategy is led by the Leeds Inter-Agency Project (LIAP). Its effectiveness is measured by the local multi-agency partnership. The **strategy provides a framework for domestic violence work** and has five objectives:
- 1) raising public awareness;
  - 2) improving agency responses;
  - 3) developing community support;
  - 4) ensuring appropriate civil and criminal justice responses;
  - 5) developing preventative and educational work.
- 9.71 Around 60 organisations have signed up to the strategy, agreeing to develop action points that feed into a three year city-wide strategy action plan. Key performance indicators have been established as a way of measuring effectiveness and a performance management framework has been put in place. Partner agencies take the lead in meeting targets for the key performance indicators and the LIAP monitors agency progress. Future work in Leeds will focus on developing a minimum standards quality mark as a tool to promote consistently high-quality services to women and children.
- 9.72 The Devon Against Domestic Violence and Abuse Partnership (ADVA) has a three **year strategy**. This follows on from three years' partnership work which has led to the establishment of the following services:
- outreach support for women victims/survivors in each of the eight districts;
  - outreach support for men victims/survivors across the county (DevonMALE);
  - children and young people's specialist worker;
  - domestic violence court hearings on one afternoon (Exeter magistrates court);

- monthly multi-agency risk assessment conferencing (MARAC) in Exeter, to write safety plans for the identified very high-risk victims;
  - a training and awareness-raising programme, which has reached 2,000 practitioners;
  - a community perpetrator programme (REPAIR);
  - development and delivery of a school curriculum programme (Home Ground);
  - pattern-changing courses for women survivors;
  - employer policy development.
- 9.73 The partnership has achieved good levels of funding for service delivery thanks to the high-level commitment from some statutory agency senior managers and annual joint funding from most statutory agencies and all of Devon's eight CDRPs. The business plan developed to support the strategy identified clear targets which were reviewed quarterly through task focussed partnership groups.
- 9.74 In terms of good practice generally, as part of an effective domestic violence strategy it is essential to engage local agencies, local partnerships and the voluntary and community sector fully in the development, as well as the delivery aspects of the strategy. It should be noted that strategies alone are meaningless without commitment and action from each individual partner agency both collectively and independently. Strategy development is only the 'end of the beginning' and it is only through successful implementation and delivery that positive outcomes will result. Domestic violence strategies should have **clear, objective, outcome-focused aims**, and **performance indicators and targets** against which progress can be measured.

### **Housing and accommodation issues**

- 9.75 **Safe accommodation and support services** are a key priority for victims of domestic violence. In the East Riding of Yorkshire Riding they are provided by the Domestic Violence Accommodation Project (D-VAP), which is part of the CDRP. **D-VAP has developed a unique partnership with East Riding council's housing services**, working together to put victims at the heart of the process. A range of housing options are provided including:
- security measures for victims who wish to remain safely in their own homes;
  - individual refuge properties located across the county; re-housing by the council, housing association or private landlord;
  - or a move to refuge provision beyond East Riding.
- 9.76 The project accepts self as well as agency referrals and, importantly, a range of support services are offered in tandem with the various housing options. This includes practical help, emotional support, legal information, safety advice and equipment, and assistance with welfare benefits and child-related services. D-VAP promotes a positive image of services and victims are encouraged to come forward in the knowledge that they will be treated in a sympathetic and non-judgemental way. Over the past three years, while referrals to the project have risen, the number of homeless households accepted as vulnerable due to domestic violence has fallen.

- 9.77 The partnership between D-VAP and housing services did result in an initial increase in homeless acceptances sustained in the second year but is now beginning to show a reduction in the third year. East Riding believes that housing services alone cannot affect any reduction in repeat presentations unless there is partnership working to provide a comprehensive support service which is available for any victim of domestic violence or abuse.
- 9.78 At Wolverhampton City Council a **Tenancy Sustainment Officer** has been in post for two years. The primary role of the TSO is to support victims of domestic violence within their own homes where this is the victim's preferred option. Otherwise advice is given about a safe house or alternative accommodation. The service is always client led. Options of an emergency alarm linked to the police can be arranged. Referrals are made from Victim Support, local housing and social services teams, local family centres, the Police Domestic Violence Unit and other agencies. In addition, the Haven organisation seconds a post to the Homeless Services Unit to support women in the council's temporary accommodation who were made homeless due to domestic violence. The Haven is a women's refuge established for more than 30 years, which provides safe temporary accommodation for women and children. Their floating support service has a range of specialisations in relation to women's needs including mental health expertise, Asian women's support and women who have experienced childhood sex abuse. A firm and robust approach is taken to anyone causing harm/harassment to tenants with the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit assisting with enforcement. An anticipated initiative is to target resources to those people who, it is felt, can safely stay in their own homes with additional services and security measures. A small amount of money has been identified initially to pilot a sanctuary project, which will be discussed with partner agencies.
- 9.79 **Tenancy agreements** can be an important tool to combat domestic violence. For instance the London Borough of Greenwich's tenancy agreement states: "The tenant must not use or threaten violence against any other person lawfully entitled to reside in the property, so that they are forced to leave by reason of the tenant's violence or fear of such violence".
- 9.80 Many local authorities have clauses in their tenancy agreements but they are **very rarely applied**. Usually there is a joint tenancy which is terminated by the victim leaving, surrendering the tenancy and being re-housed. When this happens councils do not need to use tenancy conditions to evict because the perpetrator becomes an unauthorised occupant. In some areas the victim is required to give up their tenancy if they need emergency housing. They then go onto the housing list, possibly with a lengthy wait before being permanently re-housed. Making it easier to evict the perpetrator could ease this situation. Although government guidance states that 'evidence for a conviction does not need to rely on a criminal charge' there is still confusion among many local authorities about the levels of proof needed to secure an eviction. To what extent should the victim be required to provide evidence and to what extent would information from the police or a third party, such as Women's Aid, suffice? According to the LGA there is a clear message: no matter how difficult this area of tenancy law is, councils or housing associations should be proactive in taking action against tenants who perpetrate domestic violence.

- 9.81 Councils' experience is that usually victims do not want any involvement in evicting ex-partners, especially once they themselves have been re-housed. Apart from all the issues about providing evidence, there is also the problem that a homeless perpetrator is much more of a continuing threat because they will be seeking to reconcile with or to blame the victim now that they have nowhere to live.
- 9.82 A Home Office report has recommended a number of good practice approaches by local authority housing departments in dealing with domestic violence:
- Some local authorities give additional priority to households on the housing register experiencing domestic violence (often by awarding extra points).
  - Some local authorities and RSLs have points schemes or operate management transfer arrangements for existing tenants that give priority to people experiencing domestic violence.
  - Monitoring of domestic violence could be improved by encouraging local authorities to provide figures for the number of households experiencing domestic violence that apply for housing but are rejected, and also households experiencing domestic violence that are rehoused through the housing register or the transfer list.
  - Although some local authorities may not have a choice, they should only use bed and breakfast accommodation for people experiencing domestic violence as a last resort.

### **Domestic violence and children in rural areas**

- 9.83 Local authorities should **encourage and facilitate joint service provision or shared facilities** (such as *local health or community centres*) as a means of improving access to domestic violence support in rural areas. *Primary care trusts* and *strategic health authorities* could play an important role in supporting and developing provision. Local authority departments need to **designate a representative** to regularly attend, engage with and report back on the activities of domestic violence forums. Greater use should be made of **school premises, leisure centres**, etc, where children and young people already go, for the provision of information, advice and support services. Specific **training** should be provided to *health workers* on how to detect and address sensitively cases of domestic violence.
- 9.84 Voluntary and community bodies such as Relate need to **publicise youth counselling** services more, so that young people are aware of these services. Additional support for youth-led support and advocacy groups would enable more young people to play a more active part in promoting such services.
- 9.85 It is important to note that ensuring that women in rural areas know about the services available to them can be difficult and seeking to access these services can present obstacles. Anyone living in a rural area experiencing abuse may be particularly reliant on services **reaching out to them**. However, outreach support can be problematic if the worker is known in the area, as it will be difficult to keep the nature of the contact secret. It may not be safe for a worker to visit the

woman but impractical for the woman to visit the support service because of transport, finance and childcare issues.

### **Key Issues – Best practice**

9.86 The following key issues were raised:

- LAAs provide an opportunity to improve domestic violence services through use of appropriate targets/resources
- There is a need to consider whether perpetrator programmes should be developed for perpetrators from same sex relationships or for young adults who are perpetrators
- There is a need to raise awareness about domestic violence issues amongst councillors – the Pro-Act IV theatre style presentation and associated training and Open Clasp Theatre Company presentation (about abuse in same sex relationships) could provide the means for doing this.
- IDVAs need adequate training to deliver consistent levels of support.
- The County Council needs to have a champion in relation to domestic violence issues (this links to the raising awareness agenda highlighted above).
- The Domestic Violence Forums and voluntary sector providers need to consider how improved measures can be developed to assess the effectiveness of services delivered.
- The health service and partners need to consider how data about suicides arising from domestic violence is captured.
- Co-location of staff and inter-agency working such as at Croydon Family Justice Centre results in better service provision.
- The development of a Domestic Violence Resource and Information Pack for use across agencies should be considered.
- An online survey to assess County Council workforce experiences of domestic violence might provide an opportunity for the Council to develop an appropriate workplace strategy. A similar exercise in Devon County Council highlighted the impact of domestic violence upon staff self esteem, motivation, conflict with others and sickness absence levels.
- The London Borough of Croydon has established a panel of domestic violence survivors to advise the inter-agency domestic violence forum.
- The Westminster Domestic Violence Forum domestic violence prevention pack for schools has been widely recognised as being outstanding and innovative.
- The Devon Against Domestic Violence and Abuse Partnership has a 3 year strategy which has led to the establishment of services including outreach support for male victims/survivors; a children and young people's specialist worker; training/awareness raising programme delivered to over 2000 practitioners; and employer policy development.

## Section Ten – Conclusions

### Introduction

- 10.1 The Working Group found that domestic violence covers a wide variety of actions and affects all types of people in society, regardless of age, ethnicity, faith, gender, sexuality, class, profession or income. Section Five of this report “What is Domestic Violence” attempts to map out what domestic violence is in all its forms, although the Working Group would not claim that it is by any means an exhaustive list. What is clear, however, is that the term “domestic violence” covers a wide range of issues and that it is “hidden,” being under-reported in all its manifestations. Domestic violence is abhorrent and no one deserves to be a victim of such violence.
- 10.2 Whilst statistics and research show that the main perpetrators of domestic violence are men against women (and it is in this area where most resources have been focused to date); there is growing awareness of the extent and impact of domestic violence in relation to:
- Children and young people
  - Same sex partners
  - Black and minority ethnic communities
  - The elderly (elder abuse) and other vulnerable adults
  - Men (as victims)

This means that additional resources or new ways of working may be needed to provide support in these emerging areas.

- 10.3 The varying nature and impact of domestic violence means that, potentially, a large number of agencies, both statutory and non-statutory can become involved in supporting victims and dealing with perpetrators. In scoping for the project, members of the Working Group identified what they believed to be the key players from whom to take evidence, but members recognise that there are very many other groups who are providing invaluable support to the victims of domestic violence in all its guises across County Durham.

### Issues

#### Leadership and Awareness

- 10.4 Although the County and District Councils and the Health Service have significant statutory roles in supporting the victims of domestic violence (these are set out above in the report), it is the voluntary sector which provides much of the day to day support for victims, whether in the form of helplines, refuges, specific support groups (such as DISC) or support for victims during the Court process. Members of the Working Group were impressed with the dedication of all of those they met during the course of the investigation working in this field.

- 10.5 Under the current two tier local government arrangements operating in County Durham, the County Council is not directly subject to the Best Value performance indicator for domestic violence (BVPI 225), which instead, applies to District Councils. Whilst there is a domestic violence co-ordinator for County Durham (and Darlington) funded by and operating from Durham Constabulary, the Working Group heard that responsibility for domestic violence issues within the County Council resides with a senior community safety officer in Adult and Community Services. However, this position has evolved over time because of the experience, knowledge and enthusiasm of the post holder. Indeed, the Group was given to understand that the post holder's job description does not currently specifically identify domestic violence as an area of activity.
- 10.6 Given the importance which the Working Group attaches to tackling domestic violence in all its forms, there appears to be a need for greater recognition and regularisation of the role of the existing Council post holder responsible for this issue, and additionally, more specifically for the designation of an officer at senior level to act as a Champion for domestic violence issues across the Council. Cabinet may also wish to consider whether it should appoint Champions at member level (the Working Group would suggest both an executive and a non-executive member).
- 10.7 During the course of the project, members of the Working Group expressed a desire to know more about the levels of domestic violence in their own areas. Whilst there may be issues around the analysis and interpretation of data that have to be resolved in order to provide this information, the Group felt that the existing Member Area Panel process would provide a mechanism for this data to be disseminated.
- 10.8 Allied with the suggestions for appointing "champions" within the Council in relation to domestic violence, the Working Group heard on a number of occasions about the need to promote greater awareness of domestic violence issues across the whole membership of the Council. Members of the Working Group were particularly impressed during the course of the investigation with the quality of the presentation given by Pro-Act IV, a locally based training company, at the Derwentside Domestic Violence Forum Annual Conference. In relation to LGBT issues, the Open Clasp Theatre Company also provided a frank and well performed drama piece to the LGBT Domestic Abuse Conference in December 2006.
- 10.9 In addition to raising member awareness of domestic violence generally, there are particular areas, such as domestic violence in same sex relationships, in the BME community and also elder abuse, where there is a need to provide information for councillors. The evidence session about domestic violence in same sex relationships highlighted an expressed need on the part of some members about developing greater understanding of LGBT issues. Although some of these concerns may be being addressed as part of the equalities and diversity training available to members (as part of the Council's Embracing Change Programme), there may be a need to consider what extent of take up there is and whether this provision is effective. This could perhaps also be

addressed in the suggestions made in the preceding paragraph about other development opportunities for members.

- 10.10 In the evidence from Gay Advice Darlington and Durham and Louise Brown from Bishop Auckland Women's Refuge, the Working Group also heard that there was a lack of understanding on the part of many professional staff about domestic violence in same sex or transgendered relationships. The Working Group feels there is a need to raise awareness through training opportunities for staff working in the domestic violence field, perhaps as part of a wider development agenda.
- 10.11 There have been a number of campaigns, national and local, to raise awareness about domestic violence. The Working Group heard from Angela Sheen, Senior Community Safety Officer, about the means by which local awareness raising took place. It was not clear, however, whether the effectiveness of campaigns was assessed. Building in mechanisms to assess effectiveness should be a key aspect of any publicity campaign. There are real opportunities for the County Council to contribute towards awareness raising across all aspects of domestic violence and the Working Group feel that use of the Council's free newspaper (perhaps in conjunction with other District/Borough Council newsletters) and improved domestic violence information pages on the Council's website could contribute towards this. The Council and its partners also need to consider how the effectiveness of any campaigns can be better measured in future.
- 10.12 In the evidence presented by representatives from the LGBT community the Group heard that there was perhaps unwillingness by some in those communities to recognise that domestic violence existed. It was also pointed out that there still appeared to be a reluctance on the part of some local authorities to raise awareness of LGBT issues, perhaps in consequence of Clause 28, although this was now repealed. The Racial Equality Council referred to the need for appropriate information to be provided for people living in local communities whose first language was not English and also to the changing ethnicity of some of our local communities, with increased numbers of immigrants from Eastern European countries and the growing number of "bought" brides, including those from the Far East. In the discussions with young people from DISC, and from the evidence obtained from the Sedgefield Study, there was limited knowledge of where young people could go to for help, but this appeared patchy. Members of the Working Group feel that there are opportunities to better publicise the issues; raise awareness and improve access to support through more targeted publicity material in these communities. In the case of schools, greater take up of the existing educational material about domestic violence needs to be encouraged and given the changing ethnic mix of our local communities the material itself needs to be reviewed to ensure that issues such as forced marriage and same sex issues are addressed.
- 10.13 The County Council is a major employer in County Durham. Given the nature and incidence of domestic violence, it is likely that there will be some Council employees who are victims of such violence. Angela Sheen advised the Working Group that a Domestic Violence Policy for the Council's own workforce had been drafted. This was in line with many Community Safety Strategies across the County, which contain proposals to encourage local employers to develop such Policies. The Working Group believes that a Policy should be developed for the

Council's workforce, subject to existing work demands upon Human Resources staff, perhaps as part of the Council's wider health at work initiative.

- 10.14 In the evidence from John Thornberry (Adult and Community Services) and Melanie Campbell, the Working Group heard about the need to develop stronger governance arrangements around abuse of vulnerable adults. It was suggested there was a need to raise awareness and develop greater member involvement in tackling this type of abuse, perhaps by establishing a Panel similar to the Corporate Parenting Panel, which acts as a champion for and has oversight of Looked After Children issues. Members of the Working Group felt that, given the growing awareness of adult abuse issues and the increasing numbers of reported cases, there is a need to develop this area of member oversight and involvement.

## Data

- 10.15 One of the most difficult areas for the Working Group, in terms of assessing evidence, was to gain a full understanding of the precise extent of domestic violence (or domestic abuse) in County Durham. The Working Group was presented with data based on "old" policing Divisions for one year (to March 2006), which was said to cover "all" types of domestic violence. There was no data available about the number of repeat victims, although it is understood these exist, or about the numbers of individual families where domestic violence had occurred. Nor was there any information about domestic violence in same sex-relationships, or in the BME community, or that perpetrated against men. It was clear to the Working Group that, unless and until, recording methods are improved, or more analysis of the data is undertaken, it will be difficult to better marshal resources to tackle the issues, or to undertake any meaningful comparisons with other areas. The Group heard that a number of analysts were to be appointed and that the police were being asked to provide more information. Members believe that this is essential.
- 10.16 The local incidence of domestic violence in BME and LGTB communities; by women against men; and the impact of domestic violence on young people, is not fully known. The Working Group feel that there is a need to do more to gather information about domestic violence in these areas and that the Council should seek to promote with its partners (including possible part funding) the commissioning of work to better understand the nature of these issues.
- 10.17 In the study of young people affected by domestic violence in Sedgefield, reference was also made to a large disparity in the number of juvenile concern forms completed by the police (where domestic violence was a factor) and the reported cases investigated by Social Care and Health. It was said that in 2005 some 150 forms covering the Sedgefield area referred to domestic violence as a factor, whereas Social Care and Health investigated 9 cases. Again, this highlights the need for better reporting procedures and better training for those who collect and also input data.
- 10.18 The Working Group heard in evidence from John Thornberry that there were issues about the robustness of some data linked to abuse of vulnerable adults.

Members feel that this is an area which needs to be addressed and that resources should be directed to this area if necessary.

- 10.19 One of the key issues to emerge from the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual National Conference on Domestic Violence was that of the number of suicides of victims of domestic violence. This is an area which hitherto has gone largely unrecognised, but it was suggested that suicides arising from domestic violence outnumber homicides by at least four to one. It is understood that data about suicides may be available from the health service, but the challenge for those working in the field of domestic violence will be to consider how such suicides are identified and recorded and future lessons learned, as happens now with homicide reviews.

### **Enhanced Partnership Working**

- 10.20 Tackling domestic violence in all its forms requires true cross-cutting partnership working with a wide number of agencies including the voluntary sector at a local level. The Working Group heard in evidence submitted by Angela Sheen about arrangements across County Durham (and Darlington) with a Domestic Violence Core Strategy Group and the representation thereon; the role of CDRPs and Domestic violence Forums. The Working Group was led to understand that there was a great deal of personal commitment from members of the Domestic Violence Core Strategy Group who are drawn from a number of interested agencies across the County. However, the Working Group found it difficult to ascertain the precise nature, role and reporting arrangements of the Strategy Group (which appeared to have evolved over time). Members were subsequently supplied with a copy of the Terms of Reference of the Group (see Appendix 4). The Council needs to review its existing role in partnership bodies such as the Domestic Violence Core Strategy Group, Supporting People Programme, CDRPs and in the LAA to consider how it can improve its effectiveness, promote the involvement of under-represented and/or under-served groups and better support the victims of domestic violence. **Linked to this, it may also wish to participate in the North East Steering Group on LGBT issues formed recently, following the December 2006 Regional Conference into LGBT domestic abuse.**
- 10.21 It might also be helpful for a report to Cabinet about Council involvement in those bodies which play a role in tackling domestic violence and supporting victims, which sets out the respective roles and linkages.
- 10.22 The current Local Area Agreement includes a reference to domestic violence in relation to the Safer Stronger Communities Block of the LAA (Outcome/Indicator SSC1 – Increase the number of reported domestic violence offences that are brought to justice). There are no other explicit references to domestic violence, although some other outcomes/indicators such as reducing the number of households experiencing homelessness might also be relevant. It was suggested to the Working Group that the LAA can play a valuable role in focusing resources on tackling domestic violence and supporting victims of such crime. **The Group felt there might be merit in any future review/refresh of the LAA for this issue to be considered, with a particular focus on support for victims.**

- 10.23 The provision of sufficient places at refuges is essential for those who need to flee violence, often as a matter of utmost urgency. The Working Group heard in evidence from Supporting People; the Bishop Auckland and Durham Women's Refuges; Angela Sheen and Rachel Green about the levels of provision across the County. Although there are a number of "safe" houses in Sedgefield Borough (which has the highest levels of recorded domestic violence), there is currently no refuge in Sedgefield area. The Working Group felt that the County Council should support refuge provision in the Sedgefield area, if that was what local partners wished to develop. The Group also felt that there may be a need to consider whether there should be refuge provision for those fleeing domestic violence from within the BME community; those in same sex relationships; men fleeing violence from women; and older male children, for all of whom there is currently no specific provision.
- 10.24 In the evidence about Domestic Violence Forums, members heard that the role of the County Council varied in terms of support/engagement. All the Forums have different funding sources, some voluntary, others via local authorities or CDRPs. In the evidence from East Durham Domestic Violence Forum, reference was made to the lack of previous Social Care and Health involvement in the Forum. The Group feel that the role and involvement of the Council in such bodies needs to be reviewed similar to that in paragraph 10.20 above.
- 10.25 As part of the evidence gathering for the project, the Chair of the Working Group visited Croydon Family Justice Centre to observe the way in which joined-up services are provided to victims of domestic violence. The Croydon Centre is based on the San Diego model, which has achieved significant outcomes for victims of domestic violence in the USA. The Croydon Centre brings together, in a multi-business use forum, a wide range of statutory and voluntary sector providers to ensure a holistic approach to support is available to victims. The Working Group felt that this is a model of innovation that should be drawn to the attention of the Council and its partners for possible further investigation in a County setting.

### **Improved Support for Victims and Perpetrators**

- 10.26 In the evidence from young carers (DISC) and the feedback from the Sedgefield study of young people and domestic violence, reference was made to the importance of involving young people (and by extension, other stakeholder groups) in developing and evaluating services. Members were aware that there are already developments in this area - for instance, the current Children's Plan and the Local Area Agreement contain references to the need to involve stakeholders in service development (i.e. Outcome 8 of the Children and Young People's Block has an indicator linked to greater involvement of young people and families in commissioning of services), but nevertheless, members wish to see greater stakeholder involvement driven forward.
- 10.27 In the discussions with both Angela Sheen, the police and the Crown Prosecution Service, reference was made to the programmes which had been developed for perpetrators of domestic violence. The Working Group sessions which looked at domestic violence in same sex relationships and also, domestic violence

involving young people, raised issues about whether there was a need for programmes to be developed for perpetrators in same sex relationships; for young adults; or for women who perpetrate domestic violence against men. The Working Group felt that the viability of developing programmes to address these areas should be explored.

- 10.28 In terms of newly developing areas of domestic violence, reference was made in evidence by Women's Refuge staff and also by the Senior Community Safety Officer, to the increasing numbers of "bought brides" in the County who were subject to violence from their husbands, or had been abandoned, but because of their length of stay in the UK, had no recourse to public funds (i.e. housing benefit, or legal aid). The Working Group felt that this was an area which needed greater prominence and discussion with partners to develop approaches to better support such victims.
- 10.29 In the evidence from Mark Gurney (Children's and Young People's Service) about the impact of domestic violence on young people, reference was made to the changes brought about by the Adoption and Children Act 2002 which amended the definition of "significant harm" in the Children Act 1989 to include: "Impairment of health or development caused by witnessing ill treatment of another." It was anticipated this might well result in a rise in the number of child protection referrals and there are issues about whether existing safeguarding children provision is sufficiently resourced to meet anticipated need. This will need to be investigated.
- 10.30 Alcohol and drugs can be a contributory factor in domestic violence. Evidence from the police suggested that the night-time economy, particularly at weekends, resulted in higher levels of domestic violence within overall violent crime figures. Although alcohol and drugs are often identified as a causative factor in domestic violence, less well recognised is the dependence on alcohol and drugs by some **victims** of domestic violence, which can result from ongoing domestic violence situations (raised in evidence from Bishop Auckland Women's Refuge). There are concerns about support for victims linked to this area which may need to be addressed and the Group feel that the attention of the County Durham DAAT Strategic Partnership Board should be drawn to this issue. Mandy English a co-opted member advised the Working Group that there was a fully integrated alcohol action team operating in Easington, which may address some of the Group's concerns in this regard. There are proposals to roll this out across the County.

## Section Eleven – Recommendations

### Stronger Leadership on Domestic Violence Issues by the County Council

11.1 There is currently no designated senior officer within the Council in relation to domestic violence issues. We recommend that Council/Cabinet should:

- (a) Nominate an officer at a senior level to act as a champion for domestic violence issues**
- (b) Likewise, consider designating members (one executive and one non-executive) as domestic violence champions.**
- (c) Review existing officer arrangements in relation to domestic violence so as to strengthen and bring greater clarity to the role.**
- (d) Consider whether a Member Panel (similar to Corporate Parenting Panel for Looked After Children) in relation to safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults should be established.**

### Greater Awareness about Domestic Violence

11.2 The Council should consider how greater awareness about domestic violence issues can be promoted, both amongst members; officers; in our local communities; and amongst specific communities of interest. This should also include development opportunities specifically linked to LGBT issues for members and officers. The Working Group recommends that the Council/Cabinet should:

- (a) Consider how member awareness about domestic violence issues can be raised through seminars and briefings. This should also specifically include domestic violence in the BME and LGBT communities and in the wider context (i.e. elder abuse and the impact of domestic violence on young people).**
- (b) Ask for data about the nature and extent of domestic violence at a local level to be provided on a regular basis to councillors. Member Area Panels may provide the most suitable means of disseminating this information.**
- (c) Initiate a review of training provision for Council staff working in the field of domestic violence and identify any gaps in provision within this area. The development of training opportunities for professional staff working in this field should be considered with the Council's partners, with a view (wherever possible) to providing joint training in multi-agency settings. This training should also specifically address LGBT and BME issues.**

- (d) Consider whether there are opportunities to raise awareness about domestic violence in local communities and to “signpost” victims and/or perpetrators to appropriate support by means of “Countywide,” (the Council’s free newspaper). District/Borough partners should be encouraged to do likewise.**
- (e) Ask officers to review and update existing web pages on the County Council website. The pages should include information about domestic violence in the LGBT and BME communities and that perpetrated upon young people and by women against men. Web pages should signpost victims of domestic violence to appropriate support organisations and to relevant policy documents. We would further suggest that Durham Constabulary make its domestic violence policy document more readily accessible (in electronic form).**
- (f) Develop and implement a Domestic Violence Policy for its own staff, subject to any other existing workload demands on Human Resources Division, perhaps as part of the wider health at work agenda.**
- (g) In relation to existing educational material for use in schools:**

  - (i) Review (with its partners where appropriate) the roll-out and use of existing material about domestic violence (including the “Victims of Silence” video and supporting material)**
  - (ii) Ensure that the educational material also addresses issues such as forced marriage; domestic violence in same sex relationships; and domestic violence between young adults.**
  - (iii) Encourage greater take up by schools of domestic violence information by highlighting their duty under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 to make arrangements with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.**
- (h) With its partners, seek to review the effectiveness of any future publicity material about domestic violence and, in planning any future campaigns, seek to put in place appropriate measures to do this. Any review should consider the need for publicity material targeted at:**

  - (i) Those victims for whom English is not a first language**
  - (ii) The LGBT community**
  - (iii) Young adults**

## Better Data about Domestic Violence

11.3 Without adequate information about the extent and nature of domestic violence, it is impossible to target resources effectively. The Working Group recommends that the Council/Cabinet should:

- (a) Consider (with partners) whether existing local data about domestic violence is sufficient; the recently introduced research provision to analyse the information is adequate; and whether opportunities exist for data collection mechanisms to better capture information about domestic violence in the LGBT and BME communities and about young people and men (in heterosexual relationships) as victims.**
- (b) Consider how existing mechanisms within the Council to capture and analyse incidences of abuse against vulnerable adults can be made more robust.**
- (c) With its partners, seek to ascertain how domestic violence-related suicides can be identified and lessons learnt.**
- (d) With its partners, consider whether there is a need to gather information locally about domestic violence in the LGBT and BME communities; by women against men; and between adult siblings or adult siblings upon their parents/carers. The provision of funding (preferably partial, with partners) to commission studies into these areas, about which little is currently known, should form part of this consideration.**

## Enhanced Partnership Working

11.4 Tackling domestic violence and supporting victims demands a cross-cutting, multi-agency approach. Domestic Violence Forums and refuges provide a more local focus. The main support from the County Council to local Forums to date has been “in kind” and a view was expressed in evidence that the Council has not been sufficiently engaged in some Forums to the extent which the Working Group believes is necessary. There are also newly emerging groups, including the North East Steering Group on Domestic Abuse in LGBT Relationships, where the Council may wish to be represented. The Working Group recommends that the Council/Cabinet should:

- (a) Review its involvement in the County Durham and Darlington Domestic Violence Core Strategy Group, with a view to strengthening its participation, whilst at the same time seeking to bring greater clarity to the role of the Group; its channels of communication; lines of responsibility; and effectiveness.**

- (b) With its partners, seek to encourage minority community representation (i.e. LGBT and BME communities) on the Core Strategy Group.**
- (c) In consultation with its partners, in any refresh or review of the Local Area Agreement, seek to identify whether opportunities exist to strengthen the LAA in relation to tackling domestic violence and providing greater support specifically for victims.**
- (d) Via its involvement in the Supporting People Partnership, seek to support the development of a Refuge in the Sedgefield Borough Council area, should local partners wish to develop such a facility.**
- (e) Through its involvement in the Supporting People Partnership, should strongly support ongoing funding for those Refuges across County Durham, which provide a valuable sanctuary for those who flee domestic violence.**
- (f) Seek, via the Supporting People Partnership, to encourage:**
  - (i) The development (either within the County or regionally), of refuge provision for victims from the BME or LGBT communities and for men fleeing violence from women**
  - (ii) The provision of a refuge or similar for those with older male children fleeing violence**
- (g) Review its representation and involvement with Domestic Violence Forums and other Groups to ensure that it is fully engaged in the work of those Forums/Groups and represented appropriately at meetings of those bodies.**
- (h) With partners, consider how opportunities can be developed in the County to allow victims of domestic violence to access services in multi-agency settings, similar to the Croydon Family Justice Centre initiative.**

## **Improved Support for Victims and Perpetrators**

11.5 A key aspect of service development and delivery is engagement and consultation with users of services to allow them a greater role in shaping and evaluating services. The Council/Cabinet should:

- (a) Review its own existing engagement mechanisms so as to better promote the role of service users (adults, children and those from minority communities) in shaping domestic violence service provision and should seek to encourage partners to do likewise.**

- (b) Consult with its partners to determine whether there is a need to develop perpetrator programmes in relation to:
  - (i) LGBT perpetrators**
  - (ii) Women who are perpetrators (against men)**
  - (iii) Young adults who are perpetrators****
- (c) Initiate a debate with its partners about, and itself consider, how support can be better provided for those victims of domestic violence such as “bought brides” who have no recourse to public funds.**
- (d) Given the changes introduced by Section 120 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 which amended the definition of “significant harm” in the Children Act 1989 to include: “Impairment of health or development caused by witnessing ill treatment of another,” consider whether its existing safeguarding children provision is sufficiently resourced to meet anticipated need.**
- (e) Ask the County Durham Drugs and Alcohol Action Team Board to consider how the DAAT can better address the needs of both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence where alcohol and/or drugs are implicated.**

## **Review**

- 11.6 A key element of scrutiny is reviewing recommendations to determine whether (if accepted) they have made a difference.

**It is recommended that a review of the recommendations in this report be undertaken 6 months after their consideration by Cabinet.**

## **STRONG, HEALTHY AND SAFE COMMUNITIES**

## **Appendix 1**

### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SCRUTINY PROJECT PLAN**

#### **REMIT**

- What is the extent of domestic violence in County Durham (including domestic violence in the BME and LGBT communities and against men)?
- What is the impact of domestic violence on families and particularly children?
- What is the extent of abuse of the elderly in County Durham?
- What is the level of support provided to those victims who seek to flee domestic violence in County Durham?
- Which agencies provide support services and how, where and when are they provided?
- How earlier involvement of agencies can be achieved?
- Whether closer working of partner agencies can be developed?
- The arrangements in place for refuges/housing for those fleeing domestic violence?
- What Policies and Strategies are in place to support the victims of domestic violence?
- What is the County Council's specific role in supporting victims of domestic violence?
- How can perpetrators of domestic violence be more speedily and effectively dealt with?
- What work is underway to change attitudes locally in relation to domestic violence?
- The extent of best practice in the field of domestic violence nationally?
- Are we achieving value for money through our existing approach?

<b>WHEN</b> Dates/Time/Location	<b>WHO</b> Key Witness	<b>WHAT</b> Evidence/Information	<b>HOW</b> Meeting/Visit/Correspondence Briefing Paper/Research	<b>WHY</b> Focus on Remit
Mon. 31 Jul., 2006	Angela Sheen, Senior Community Safety Officer	What is Domestic Violence?	Briefing	Scene setting/focus/challenge
Mon, 4 Sept, 11.00 Cttee. Rm 1(a)				Agree terms of reference and project plan
Wed, 13 Sept, 10 a.m. Cttee. Rm 2	Angela Sheen, Senior Community Safety Officer, Adult and Community Services	Data about domestic violence  How domestic violence is recorded	Briefing	What is the extent of domestic violence in County Durham (including domestic violence in the BME and LGBT communities and against men?)

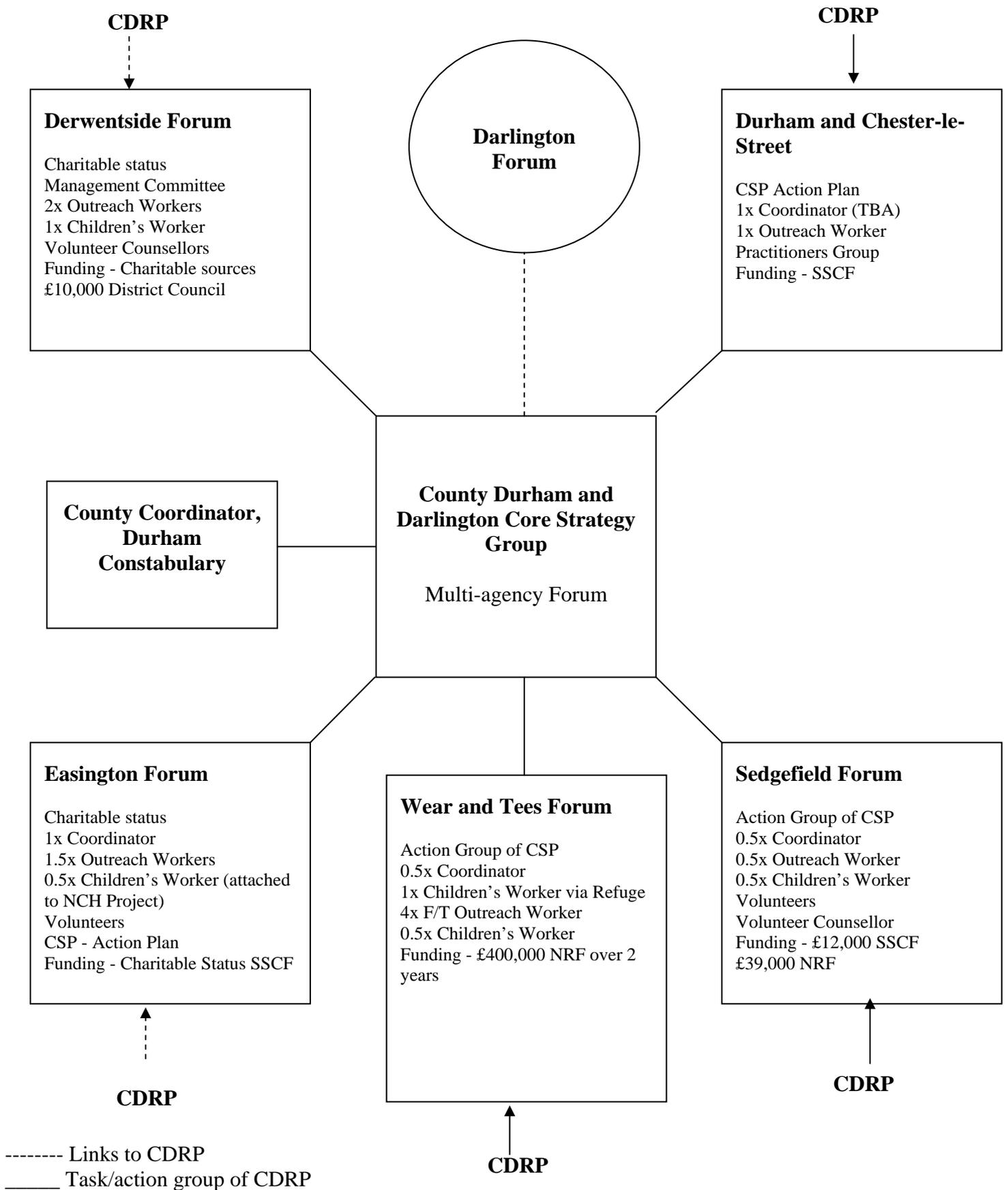
<b>WHEN</b> Dates/Time/Location	<b>WHO</b> Key Witness	<b>WHAT</b> Evidence/Information	<b>HOW</b> Meeting/Visit/Correspondence /Briefing Paper/Research	<b>WHY</b> Focus on Remit
Mon, 9 Oct, 10 a.m. Cttee. Rm 2	Mark Gurney, Strategic Manager, Children in Need, Children and Young People's Services  Felicity Shenton (Consultant)  Jo Dawson, General Manager, CAMHS	Child Protection Procedures and the role of the Local Safeguarding Children Board  Children's Views  Impact of Domestic Violence on young people (mental health issues) and services provided	Briefing	What is the impact of domestic violence on families and particularly children?
Mon, 23 Oct, 10 a.m. Cttee. Rm. 1(a)	David Haw – Age Concern County Durham	Local/national perspective		What is the extent of abuse of the elderly in County Durham?

<b>WHEN</b> Dates/Time/Location	<b>WHO</b> Key Witness	<b>WHAT</b> Evidence/Information	<b>HOW</b> Meeting/Visit/Correspondence/ Briefing Paper/Research	<b>WHY</b> Focus on Remit
Thurs, 2 Nov, 10 a.m. Council Chamber	Angela Sheen and Rachel Green  Diane Richardson, Designated Nurse (Child Protection/Vulnerable Children, (County Durham and Darlington PCTs)	Overview of the different types of support available  How domestic violence is recognised and advice and encouragement given	Briefing	What is the level of support provided to those victims who seek to flee domestic violence in County Durham?
Tues, 14 Nov, 10 a.m. Council Chamber	Input from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police (Inspector Mick Button)</li> <li>• Women's Support Groups (Fiona Nichol, Bishop Auckland Refuge)</li> <li>• Domestic Violence Forums (Paula Sugden, Outreach Worker, Easington)</li> <li>• Victim Support (Clare Sandford)</li> </ul>	Roles and operation of key agencies  Mechanisms for ensuring co-ordination	Briefing	Which agencies provide support services and how, where and when are they provided?  How can earlier involvement of agencies be achieved?  How can closer working of partner agencies be developed?

<b>WHEN</b> Dates/Time/Location	<b>WHO</b> Key Witness	<b>WHAT</b> Evidence/Information	<b>HOW</b> Meeting/Visit/Correspondence/ Briefing Paper/Research	<b>WHY</b> Focus on Remit
Fri, 24 Nov, 11 a.m. Cttee. Rm 1(b)	Jenny Warren and Melanie Turnbull, Supporting People  Susan Cartmell, Durham Women's Refuge  Lynne Kittoe, Easington District Council Housing Service  Angela Sheen	Types of provision and procedures        Policies	Briefing	What arrangements are in place for refuges/housing for those fleeing domestic violence?       What Policies and Strategies are in place to support the victims of domestic violence?
Mon, 4 Dec, 11 a.m. Cttee. Rm 1(a)	Angela Sheen   Rachel Green   Janet Mason, CPS	County Council support   What Happens to Perpetrators? The Perpetrator Programme  Bringing perpetrators to justice	Briefing	What is the County Council's specific role in supporting victims of domestic violence?  How can perpetrators of domestic violence be more speedily and effectively dealt with?

<b>WHEN</b> Dates/Time/Location	<b>WHO</b> Key Witness	<b>WHAT</b> Evidence/Information	<b>HOW</b> Meeting/Visit/Correspondence/ Briefing Paper/Research	<b>WHY</b> Focus on Remit
Wed, 13 Dec, 11 a.m. Cttee. Rm 1(a)	Angela Sheen/Rachel Green  Jane Stout (Children and Young People's Services)  Northumbria University	Education and publicity  Education  Best practice	Briefing	What work is underway to change attitudes locally in relation to domestic violence?  Extent of best practice in the field of domestic violence nationally?
Fri, 12 Jan, 10 a.m. Cttee. Rm 1(a)	TBC – Audit Colleagues  Consultation Feedback		Briefing	Are we achieving value for money through our existing approach?
Mon, 22 Jan, 10 a.m. Cttee. Rm 2		Recap – other evidence needed. Conclusions and Recommendations	Meeting	
Friday 2 Feb 10 a.m.	John Thornberry			Elder Abuse
Fri, 9 Feb, 10 a.m. Cttee. Rm 1(b)		Recap – other evidence needed. Conclusions and Recommendations		
<b>Additional Consultation meetings</b>	Young people, BME, LGBT, and Women's Groups.		Roundtable Session with young people, BME and LGBT Groups Visit(s) to Women's Refuge(s)	

## Appendix 2 Domestic Violence Structures at County Level



**Domestic Violence Core Strategy Group**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title/Organisation</b>
Allyson Storey	Fieldwork Support Manager, Victim Support
Angela Sheen	Senior Community Safety Officer, Community Safety, DCC
Anna Lynch	Director of Public Health and Health Development, Easington PCT
Barbara Hill	Legal Planning and Partnership Consultant, Legal Services Commission
Berni Thompson	Team Manager- Assessments, Darlington Borough Council
Claire Sullivan	Deputy Director of Public Health, Easington PCT
Diane Richardson	Designated Nurse for Child Protection and Vulnerable Children (Co. Durham and Darlington PCTs), Chester le Street Health Centre
Elsi Hampton	Consultant, Diocese of Durham
Fiona Nicol	Women's Aid Domestic Violence Outreach Worker, Women's Refuge
Gail Murphy	Outreach Worker, Easington Domestic Violence Forum
Hazel Willoughby	National Probation Service
Jan Mason	Crown Prosecution Service
Jane Stout	Pupil Caseworker, Safeguarding & Specialist Services
Janet Higgins	Initiative Officer, Easington District Council
Jenny Warren	Supporting People - West Wing Offices, DCC
Jill McGregor	Service Manager - Children In Need South, Safeguarding & Specialist Services
Joy Easterby	SureStart
Judith McPherson	Project Coordinator, DISC
Julie Scurfield	Area Manager - North, YES, DCC
Kirsty Golightly	Community Safety Officer, Community Safety, DCC
Lucy Wheatley	Children's Programme Leader, Darlington PCT
Maggie Thompson	Derwentside Domestic Violence Forum

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title/Organisation</b>
Marcia Duckett	Outreach Worker, Sherburn Road Community Action Partnership
Mark Gurney	Strategic Manager - Children In Need, DCC
Pat McManus	Crime Reduction Programme Manager, GONE
Paula Sugden	East Durham Domestic Violence Forum
Peter Kaszefo	Racial Equality Council
Rachel Green	Domestic Violence Coordinator, Durham Constabulary
Tracy Olley	Domestic Abuse Coordinator, No. 75 (Wear Valley District Council)
Verna Fee	Involvement and Partnerships Officer, Derwentside PCT

### County Durham and Darlington Domestic Violence Core Strategy Group

#### Terms of Reference 2005/06

##### **Statement of Intent**

The County Durham and Darlington Domestic Violence Core Strategy Group will seek to challenge and prevent domestic violence and abuse by ensuring the effective participation of the Private, Public and Voluntary sectors in the provision of appropriate services.

##### **Definition**

The group has adopted the following Home Office definition of domestic violence:

“Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, financial, sexual or emotional) between those who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.”

##### **Key Objectives**

Member agencies agree to work together:

- To ensure the safety of victims of domestic violence is afforded priority across County Durham and Darlington.
- To promote as unacceptable, any act of Domestic Violence and Abuse wherever it occurs.
- To develop a strategic action plan that is specific, measurable, achievable, and realistic with timescales.
- Support and enable the delivery of services for victims who have been or are currently experiencing domestic violence with a view to increasing reporting and reducing repeat victimisation.
- Work in partnership to develop and share good practice which meets the needs of people experiencing domestic violence.
- To ensure issues of equal opportunities and access are integrated into all work undertaken in relation to domestic violence.
- To raise awareness within schools of domestic violence issues and the impact on children and young people, to enable staff to provide an appropriate response to disclosure and on-going support.
- To develop and disseminate, through practical courses, resources, to enable education staff to address domestic violence issues within the curriculum.
- To recognize the impact domestic violence has on health inequalities and ensure linkages are made within NHS and Local Authority planning processes when addressing this issue.
- To implement and monitor work with perpetrators of domestic violence.
- To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of sensitive courts.
- To promote the development of specialist services for children.
- Encourage service providers to consult with victims of domestic violence and abuse.
- To initiate the development, production and delivery of awareness raising and multi-agency training programmes across County Durham and Darlington and identify gaps.

- To collectively consider policy and practice issues.
- To develop a commonality of approach where this is appropriate.

### **Frequency**

Meetings will be held six weekly.

### **Location of Meetings**

Forest House, Aykley Heads.

### **Membership**

Membership of this group will be open to any organisation from the public private community or voluntary sector that has an interest in combating domestic violence. Members will be of sufficient seniority to influence policy/procedures and resource allocation within their organisation.

### **Sub Groups**

Sub groups will be set up depending on what specific actions the Strategy Group wants taking forward, where specific issues needs to be addressed. This information will be fed back into the Strategy Group and once the Sub Groups have achieved their objectives, these groups will be disbanded until further specific pieces of work are required. Membership of these groups will be open to all those who have contributions to make and individuals can be co-opted for specific pieces of work. The membership will be for the chair to determine together with the Core Strategy Group.

### **Chair**

Angela Sheen, Senior Community Safety Officer, Durham County Council

### **Vice Chair**

Sheliagh Kelly, Services Development Manager (North East), Stonham Housing

### **Secretariat**

To be provided by the agency holding the chair, currently Durham County Council.

### **Reporting Arrangements**

Members of the Core Strategy Group and Sub-Groups will report and be accountable to their own organisations. The Core Strategy Group will report to the Strong Healthy, Safe Communities Partnership and the Community Safety Partnership's in County Durham and Darlington.

### **Information Flow**

The Core Strategy Group is committed to an inclusive process that ensures effective information flow within and between agencies and participating groups. Members are committed to arrangements set out below:

The Chair will ensure that minutes of the meetings are circulated to the chairs of all Local Domestic Violence Task/Action Groups across the County and Darlington, and that the views of the Local Groups inform the work of the Core Strategy Group. The County Strategic Coordinator will meet with all the chairs from the Local Groups on a quarterly basis so that this flow of information is maintained.

The County Strategic Coordinator will also maintain close links with the Local Forum Groups, the chairs of which will also be invited to attend the quarterly meetings with the Task/Action Groups Chairs.

Durham County Council and Darlington Borough Council Community Safety Coordinators will be provided with a quarterly progress report to feed into all of all Crime and Disorder Reduction/Community Safety Partnerships in County Durham and Darlington. Information will be feedback from the Partnerships to inform the work of the Core Strategy Group.

A member of the Core Strategy Group will attend the Local Safeguarding Children's Boards for County Durham and Darlington and will provide direct feedback to the group.

It is anticipated that in addition, participating groups may wish to make other demands on the Strategy Group as the process evolves.