



Stockport Domestic Abuse Forum Strategy for 2005 - 2008

1) Introduction

3.1. Definition

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” This includes issues of concern to black and minority ethnic (BME) communities such as so called ‘honour killings’.

(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).

If a child or a vulnerable adult is victim of domestic abuse this must be reported to the Safeguarding Children Unit and other appropriate agencies under the Child Protection Act and the "All Agency Adult Protection Policy".

3.2. Who does it concern?

Anyone can experience domestic violence - it can happen in all kinds of relationships and for any reason, regardless of age, race, gender, sexuality, disability, wealth, locality and lifestyle.

It is rarely a one-off event. Physical and sexual abuse tends to become more severe and happen more often over time, sometimes only ending when one person actually kills the other. Forced Marriage is also a form of domestic violence and an abuse of the human rights.

Domestic violence is chronically under-reported. The figures show, however, that it consists mainly of violence by men against women. It has been proven that domestic abuse often starts or worsens during pregnancy.

Children are also affected. Not only are many traumatised by what they witness, there is also a strong connection between domestic violence and child abuse. Children's health and overall well-being can be adversely affected by living in a household where there is any form of domestic abuse.

Domestic violence costs the country around £23bn a year, of which £3bn falls to public services.

2) Purpose

The purpose of the Stockport Domestic Abuse Forum is to work to prevent violent and abusive behaviour within partner and family relationships, in Stockport. We recognise that domestic abuse is a widespread problem, and we will not tolerate or ignore it. In addressing the issue, we must deal with the range of consequences for those involved and the inadequacies in the services currently available. While this work needs to take place within the context of the broader crime and disorder reduction strategy, the nature and effects of domestic abuse are such that we need to develop specific ways of dealing with it.

3) Objectives

Therefore, our objectives are:

- 3.3. To change attitudes towards domestic abuse: increasing awareness and reducing tolerance of such behaviour, and increasing the proportion reported to the Police and other partnership agencies
- 3.4. Improve the effectiveness of services in providing protection and support to people experiencing or affected by domestic abuse, including children in households where such abuse is taking place
- 3.5. Develop and improve ways of addressing the behaviour of those responsible for domestic violence, by means of enforcement, including prosecution, and support for behaviour change.
- 3.6. To ensure service providers and practitioners have a clear guidance on how to respond to DA situations through the use of a code of practice which will be developed by the DAF. This code of practice will provide a basis for policy and procedure of agencies.

4) Addressing the objectives

The Stockport DAF has identified key issues in relation to domestic abuse as:

- ❖ barriers to reporting and accessing services (within the individual as well as organisations)
- ❖ high levels of repeat victimisation
- ❖ high levels of repeat offending
- ❖ the impact on children and vulnerable adults.

The Terms of Reference provide a clear guideline on the DAF's remit, role and structure. Please refer to document for more information.

In order to address these issues, the work of the DAF will focus on the following themes:

4.1. Public Information and Marketing

We will continue to develop and coordinate campaigning publicity and improve the availability and accessibility of information and advice to the public and service providers. This will include ensuring domestic abuse is appropriately covered in 'mainstream' publications and websites of the partner organisations, as well as producing specialist materials. Specifically the group's objectives are:

- ❖ Raise Awareness about Domestic Abuse
- ❖ Raise Awareness on DAF work
- ❖ Raise Awareness on Services available for support and help
- ❖ Evaluate and monitor the campaigns launched

4.2. Information sharing

One of the obstacles to effectively dealing with domestic abuse is lack of coordination of incident and case recording, resulting in an incomplete picture of the extent and patterns of the problem, and impeding collaboration between services. Therefore, the DAF will seek to identify ways of improving information collection and sharing. This will build on the new Greater Manchester Crime and Disorder Data sharing model protocol, and identify and learn from good practice in other areas. In order to do so, the group will link with other agencies to collect general information on domestic abuse within their services.

4.3. Training

The DAF will continue to develop and coordinate provision of a range of appropriate training for service providers. It will set actions in order to ensure the satisfaction of the new BVPIs in regards of training requirements.

The group's objectives are to:

- ❖ Provide a focal point for all DV training
- ❖ List and promote available DV training in Stockport & elsewhere
- ❖ Identify gaps and needs
- ❖ Set training programmes and packages based on type and target of DV training.
- ❖ Liase with other training initiatives in Stockport to provide a joint approach.
- ❖ Test and evaluate the level of awareness gained through training.

4.4. Policy Development

We will build on the progress made with the Stockport Domestic Violence Declaration, by pursuing the development and implementation of policies in partner organisations and other employers and service providers. Many organisations and services which are not directly targeted at people affected by domestic abuse, need to be able to respond appropriately when they find out that either a customer or employee is experiencing or involved in domestic abuse. Objectives for this group consist of:

- ❖ Setting of a three year strategy for the DAF
- ❖ Yearly update of the DAF Strategy
- ❖ Verify that each statutory agency in Stockport operates an effective DA Policy
- ❖ Assure efficient procedures
- ❖ Establish a 'Code of Practice' to facilitate the good implementation of the policy in Stockport.
- ❖ Provide support for agencies in Stockport willing to improve their quality of services in regards of Domestic Abuse by the adaptation of the DA policy and Code of Practice.
- ❖ Quality Assure

4.5. Protection and support

We will identify gaps in the current service provision for those experiencing domestic violence (including children, vulnerable adults and offenders) through consultation with service users and providers, and develop and pursue recommendations for change and development of dedicated services.

- ❖ List and promote existing services available for people who are or have been experiencing domestic abuse in Stockport
- ❖ Identify Improvements required to current services
- ❖ Support the development of services including advocacy and Workshops
- ❖ Evaluate and monitor

4.6. Criminal Justice

There are issues in relation to how the Criminal Justice system deals with domestic abuse, including support from a range of agencies for those affected and effectiveness of prosecution and sentencing. The Government has identified many of these as priorities for action. We will seek to link with and inform the work of the local Criminal Justice Board, which will have responsibility for taking forward this work by raising the domestic abuse issues and requirements to the group. The objectives of this group for the DAF is:

- ❖ To ensure improvements to services for victims and witnesses, taking account of the particular needs of people experiencing domestic abuse.
- ❖ Advise the V&WAG on problems with existing services as identified by DAF and the survivor's group.
- ❖ Consult the V&WAG on proposals for new or changed services developed by the DAF
- ❖ Inform the DAF about relevant work of the V&WAG
- ❖ Monitor DA cases through the court and the proportion of attrition rate

5) Implementation and reporting

A lead person will be identified for each theme, from within or outside the existing membership of the Forum, as appropriate.

Sub groups will deliver on some areas, while individual members of the Forum will act as 'champions' for other themes, by engaging with other agencies as appropriate.

Each lead person or group will develop their own work plan to be agreed and monitored by the Forum, which will in turn report on progress to the Safer Stockport Partnership's Crime and Disorder Executive.

A co-ordinator will be linking all the groups and inform the DAF on the progress on a holistic perspective. The co-ordinator will also be responsible for the setting of the group's action plan as well as projects launched by the Forum.

6) Membership

- 6.1. The Forum will seek to include representatives of all the organisations and services, working in Stockport, with responsibilities for addressing domestic abuse. Representation of services will be at a level with authority to make decisions and commit resources to address the agreed actions.
- 6.2. Members of the Forum attend as representatives of their agency/service, and are responsible and accountable for delivering specific objectives and targets, set out in an action plan and/or subsequently agreed at meetings of the group. These representatives will also work to promote the objectives of the Forum within their organisations, and work to support their organisation's contribution to the Stockport Domestic Abuse Strategy. The DAF objectives and targets should be incorporated into the agency or departmental business plan, and individual work plans.
- 6.3. The DAF consists in three levels of membership:
- ❖ Active member part of the Domestic Abuse Forum
 - ❖ Active members part of the implementation groups
 - ❖ The "Circulation list" consists in all the people wishing to receive information about the DAF but may not want to be directly involved in the work.
- 6.3.1. *Active member part of the Domestic Abuse Forum*
- Only one member from each agency can be represented in the forum. This however is not applicable to staff which represents an agency specialised in domestic abuse issues (i.e. DVU, SWC, SWA...).
- Members will be in charge of transferring the information to their colleagues who may be interested by our work.
- 6.3.2. *Active members part of the implementation groups*
- The implementation groups are open to any professional/agency who would like to join their efforts in order to improve the services for domestic abuse victims, survivors and abusers. For more information about the implementation groups, see "3.2. Structure" of the Terms of Reference.
- If a new member wishes to attend a meeting please email the domestic abuse co-ordinator on DAF@stockport.gov.uk giving all their details.
- 6.3.3. *The "Circulation list" consists in all the people wishing to receive information about the DAF but may not want to be directly involved in the work.*
- This list is widely open to professionals/agencies and is managed by the co-ordinator. The type of information sent is general and consists in things such as the DAF Newsletter, information on events, training, etc.
- Please email the domestic abuse co-ordinator on DAF@stockport.gov.uk to give the details of someone who would like to be part of this circulation list (via email).

7) Activities

In order to address its objectives the DAF will:

- ❖ Ensure the appropriate representation of organisations and services are involved in the group's work
- ❖ Locate, identify and analyse appropriate information and data, as the basis for action, including the findings of consultation with service users, providers, practitioners and survivors of domestic abuse, and evaluated good practice developed elsewhere.
- ❖ Monitor the environment (e.g. legislative and social/economic changes) and identify implications for the work of the DAF
- ❖ Develop action plans for the areas of work identified in the Domestic Abuse Strategy. These will identify individual responsibilities and time-scales for delivery of specific actions and set out appropriate performance indicators.
- ❖ Arrange/seek appropriate action to address obstacles to the implementation of the action plan

- ❖ Meet at least every 2 months, as necessary to develop, implement and report on action.
- ❖ Report on progress against the Action Plan to the C&D Exec three times each year, ensuring appropriate representation of the DAF at its meetings
- ❖ Consider the comments, proposals and critics of the survivor's group.

8) Measuring Domestic Abuse and progress in addressing it

8.1. Key indicators for measuring the importance and effects of our work will include:

- ❖ Best Value Performance Indicators (amended version BVPI 225)
- ❖ Perceptions and satisfaction levels of service users, providers, practitioners and survivors of domestic abuse, as expressed in consultation
- ❖ Repeat victimisation rate in cases reported to the Police
- ❖ Rate of convictions gained for cases reported to the Police
- ❖ Number of domestic assault cases recorded at the hospital A&E
- ❖ Numbers accessing services provided specifically for those experiencing domestic abuse
- ❖ Numbers of domestic abuse victims, survivors and perpetrators accessing services provided by agencies in Stockport Borough.
- ❖ Proportion of those entering emergency accommodation who are successfully re-housed.
- ❖ Number of civil actions involving domestic abuse dealt with by Stockport Magistrates Court
- ❖ Number of Domestic Violence training days provided by the DAF
- ❖ Number of domestic abuse incidents and cases involving defined vulnerable adults and children protection to be produced quarterly.

Notes: BVPI Amended 225

1. Has the local authority produced a directory of local services that can help victims of domestic violence?
2. Is there within the local authority area a minimum of 1 refuge place per ten thousand population?
3. Does the local authority employ directly or fund a voluntary sector based domestic violence co-ordinator? *(For District Councils of fewer 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 definition)*
4. Has the local authority produced and adopted a multi-agency strategy to tackle domestic violence developed in partnership with other agencies?
5. Does the local authority support and facilitate a local multi-agency domestic violence forum that meets at least 4 times a year?
6. Has the local authority developed an information-sharing protocol and had it agreed between key statutory partners?
7. 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 choose to do so and where safety can be guaranteed? *(For smaller district authorities, of fewer than 35,000 households this can be arranged in partnership with neighbouring authorities.)*
8. 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?
9. Does the council's tenancy agreement have a specific clause stating that 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.)*
10. Has the local authority funded and developed a domestic violence education pack in consultation with the wider domestic violence forum?
11. Has the 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?