

## Report to Domestic Violence Task and Finish Group

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Self Assessment of Domestic Violence</b>
<b>Date:</b>	Monday 21 <sup>st</sup> November 2011
<b>Author:</b>	Teresa Martin - Senior Community Safety Officer
<b>Contact officer:</b>	Sue Burke – Domestic and Sexual Violence Coordinator
<b>Report signed off by Cabinet Member and Strategic Director:</b>	Martin Phillip and Neil Gibson
<b>Electoral divisions affected:</b>	[Electoral divisions]

**\*\* All Agenda Items should include a summary report, using this template. The maximum length should be no more than 4 pages.\*\***  
**\*\* Please seek guidance from the scrutiny team staff on what papers are needed. For example, detailed information may be provided in appendices.\*\***  
**\*\* See the 'Guidelines for OSCC Meeting Preparation' for more information. \*\***

### Purpose of Agenda Item

This report is to give an overview to work that has been done in relation to the areas that need development which have been identified through the current DV Strategy action plan and the Audit Commission Self Assessment Tool.

### Background

The Audit Commission produced a Domestic Abuse Partnership: Area Self-Assessment tool to help areas think about the strengths and weaknesses of the Domestic Abuse Partnership. There are three themes and four aspects of work:

#### Themes:

- A joint partnership approach
- A victim centred approach including and understanding of diversity
- Effective use of funds, understanding costs, benefits and outcomes

#### Aspects:

- Prevention
- Early Identification
- Advice and Support
- Dealing with perpetrators

Completion of the self-assessment identified that Buckinghamshire is doing well in the majority of areas, but also identified areas for improvement within the partnership. It was a useful exercise in that it confirmed areas we were aware needed further development and



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



also where the focus needed to move to in the new DV strategy which is currently being developed for introduction in the Spring of 2012.

The current DV strategy for 2009-2012 is coming to an end in March 2012 and from this strategy an action plan was developed. The current strategy was broad and had a huge amount to achieve, due to the amount of developments required from a national and local steer and catering for local need. Overall the strategy has been successful and the DV partnership landscape is very different now to the one in 2009. Partly due to the breadth and complexity of the strategy and also how most action plans pan out over a period of time, a small number of areas of this strategy have not been completed; though all have been worked on - these correlate to the areas identified in the self-assessment. Partnership agencies are experiencing various challenges within their work environments currently resulting in some areas where progress had been made being reduced due to external factors beyond our control.

Much has been achieved within this strategy period, including increased provision of service and a raised profile both with professionals and the public alike.

## Summary

The areas that were identified in needing development in Buckinghamshire were:

- Develop ways of learning from victims/survivors to help with strategy and service improvements  
Currently we gain views on an adhoc basis from both Aylesbury and Wycombe Women's Aid clients on any upcoming projects or consultations, they also provide a collective voice for those who experience DV on the Domestic and Community Violence Board and local fora to ensure that the 'victims voice' is heard. This needs to be more formalised with specific focus groups of victims/survivors consulted on strategy, services and proposals, so that their experience and views can be incorporated in their development.
- Strategies and available information do not reflect the diversity of local need  
There have been steps in this area, but these have not been developed further, in part, due to the reduction in the number of community groups that support BME, LGBT and traveller/gypsy communities. Wycombe Women's Aid provide outreach to Asian women, following an identification of need and data and analysis has started to look at who is accessing what services and where the gaps of service provision are, but more work needs to be done.
- Services need to better reflect local geography  
Within Buckinghamshire 35% of people live in rural areas, some of these areas can be isolated and for people that are already isolated (DV victims), this can exacerbate their situation further. Although all our services cover the whole county and support agencies travel to convenient and safe place for victims, the hub of services are in the urban areas of the county so therefore are not as easily to accessible for those living in our rural communities. The Women's Institute (WI), commissioned a report called: "Violence Against Women in Rural and Urban Areas", this compared the experience of urban and rural victims. The WI report discovered that both urban and rural victims experience DV in the same way, but they are more likely to access health services for support. Work needs to build on what has been done already in ensuring that those living in rural areas find it as easy as possible to access support services.

- Develop long-term goals as a focus for all prevention work  
Prevention work is one of the most successful and achievable ways in reducing the incidence of DV in the long term. Much work has been done with schools, but due to the number and diversity it has not been an easy task. The current situation is adhoc training for schools when requested and good provision of support for those schools when they are confronted with one their pupils who are experiencing DV at home. There is however, less work in schools in relation to promoting healthy relationships, either through PHSE lessons or in a whole school approach. This current experience will be challenged further by many schools seeking academy status. This needs a concerted coordinated approach in order for schools to embrace this work.
- Identify spend on prevention as a first step to assessing the cost-effectiveness of alternative activities  
The commissioning arrangements within the county have grown organically with 'pots' of money becoming available and sort to seek to provide services to meet the need locally. Currently there is work being down within BCC to have a more coordinated approach to funding and tendering of services for victims, perpetrators and children.
- The partnership should ensure that housing options fit the diversity of local victims including across gender  
Within Buckinghamshire, we have two refuges one in Aylesbury and the other in Wycombe provided by Women's Aid. These provide high quality, expert support for those women who are fleeing their abusive partner. This provision is needed without question, but there may not be enough choice of different sorts of accommodation for varying groups of people. Men, for example very rarely require refuge provision but they may want quick access to safe accommodation especially if their situation has made them homeless.

### **Resource implications**

Currently across partners a total of around £500K is given to the provision of DV services and support. The partnership is committed to keeping these services as DV has been identified as one of the top three priorities due to the vulnerability of those who experience it. The current funding is not guaranteed for the future and going forward as more pressures are put on partnership budgets, this could impact negatively on any funding for DV services.

### **Next Steps**

As the current strategy draws to a close, sights are being set on the new strategy and its development. In January there is going to be a stakeholder meeting that reviews the current strategy, its successes and challenges, but then turn towards the future and decide what the partnership needs to focus on. The development will be informed by the current action plan, the self-assessment tool and the Bucks Safeguarding Children Board audit which is also taking place at this time. It will also be informed by the development in the commissioning arrangements within BCC in relation to DV.