

- Health Authority See below
- Police See below
- Other Bodies/Individuals All partner agencies have been consulted on the development of the draft strategy, through a multi-agency conference.

FINAL DECISION

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet To cabinet for approval following further consultation with partners (see below).
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation Further consultation required with agencies involved in domestic abuse work

**Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny Committee
15th January 2008.**

Domestic Abuse - A Strategy for Warwickshire

**Report of the Director of Community Protection and
County Fire Officer**

Recommendation

That the Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the attached Draft Domestic Abuse Strategy for Warwickshire and comments upon it.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Domestic abuse is a serious issue. In Warwickshire we have a strong partnership approach to dealing with domestic abuse in all its forms – physical, psychological, sexual and financial. Central government, through the National Community Safety Plan 2008-11, Cutting Crime 2008-11 and specifically in the Domestic Violence Act 2004, requires domestic abuse to be targeted by local authorities, working in partnership with key organisations.
- 1.2 Domestic abuse is defined 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.
- 1.4 In Warwickshire in the year April 2006 – March 2007 there were a total of 6755 incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police (a 76.5% increase on the previous year). At an average cost to agencies of £13,000 per incident, the cost in Warwickshire last year was over £87 million.
- 1.5 The Local Government Association document “Local Government’s role in tackling domestic violence” (2006) concludes that Local authorities have a corporate responsibility to deal with domestic violence. This role is detailed further in the draft strategy.

In addition Home Office Guidance on multi-agency working recommends that every authority publish a clear policy on domestic violence, which is understood and complied with by its entire staff.

- 1.5 The strategic responsibility for domestic abuse in Warwickshire rests with the Warwickshire Safer Communities Partnership, which includes Warwickshire

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County Council, Warwickshire Probation, Crown Prosecution Service, Courts Service, District and Borough Councils, and the Primary Care Trust. A task and finish group has been set up to oversee the development of this strategy and action plan.

2.0 Warwickshire's Domestic Abuse Strategy

- 2.1 Following a consultative conference held in November 2007 and attended by 50 representatives of agencies from across the county, a three year multi-agency strategy has been drafted in order to deliver and develop services in partnership with other agencies, with the ultimate aim of reducing the incidence of domestic abuse in Warwickshire.
- 2.2 This strategy's proposed key objectives, based on consultation, needs analysis and knowledge of best practice are:
- **Safety and Support**
To ensure that the safety and support needs of those experiencing domestic abuse are met through well-resourced, safe, accessible services.
 - **Protection and justice**
To ensure that perpetrators are held accountable through a co-ordinated response which does not compromise the safety of victims and children.
 - **Prevention and early intervention**
To reduce incidents of domestic abuse and ensure that it is confronted and challenged by services so that victims, perpetrators and families are able to access services earlier.
 - **Children and young people**
To ensure children and young people who have witnessed domestic abuse are able to access appropriate services and that children and young people are given the skills to build relationships based on respect and equality.
 - **Co-ordinated response**
To ensure that agencies work together to provide a co-ordinated and co-operative response that meets the needs of victims of domestic abuse and their children and challenges perpetrators.

These key objectives will be delivered through annual action plans, with specific targets and outcomes.

3.0 Recommendation

That the Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the attached Draft Domestic Abuse Strategy for Warwickshire and comments upon it.

4.0 Next steps

It is intended that this draft be amended following comments from Members and then circulated to partners for their comment. A final draft, with accompanying annual action plan, will then be presented to Cabinet for approval.

WILLIAM BROWN
Strategic Director of
Community Protection

Shire Hall
Warwick

21ST December 2007



Warwickshire Domestic Abuse Strategy

2008-2011

Draft

This strategy was produced by Warwickshire County Council in partnership with statutory and voluntary organisations working together throughout Warwickshire and in consultation with service users.

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1 Introduction

Domestic Abuse is not acceptable within any society.

Warwickshire has a tradition of providing good support for those experiencing domestic abuse in the county. Over recent years a number of innovative responses have been trialled, some having more success than others. However, lessons can be learnt from all these initiatives and these lessons are reflected in this document.

There is a commitment from all relevant agencies to a more joined-up multi-agency way of working. This document aims to provide a joint vision and a strategic framework to enable this commitment to be put into action to provide improved services in Warwickshire.

However, it has to be accepted that there is a need to provide a wide-ranging support network for families experiencing domestic abuse, and that much of this support has to be provided by non-statutory independent agencies for whom short-term, restricted funding challenges their capacity to provide and develop services.

Delivery of the Strategic Aims will be achieved through annual Action Plans. These will need to recognise that some actions can be achieved quickly, whilst others may develop over the three years of the strategy. Whatever the time scale, the commitment of WCC and its partners to the achievement of these aims is essential.

2 Definition of Domestic Abuse and National Data

Domestic abuse is defined 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 sexuality¹.

Domestic abuse is rarely a one-off incident and should be seen as a pattern of abusive and controlling behaviour through which the abuser seeks power over their victim. It occurs across the whole of society, regardless of age, gender, race, sexuality, disability, religion, class, or lifestyle and income. However, data shows that the majority of domestic abuse is perpetrated by men against women.

Crimes committed in the name of 'honour', forced marriage and female genital mutilation are also considered acts of domestic abuse (Home Office, 2007, Domestic Violence: A MP's Guide).

Domestic abuse is under reported. It is estimated that only 40 % of domestic abuse is reported to the police (Crime in England and Wales 2003/2004).

However, current national data shows that domestic abuse:

- accounts for 16% of all violent crime (33 per cent of violent incidents against women were domestic violence, compared with six per cent of incidents against men - (Crime in England and Wales 2006/07)

¹ Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those under 18 who are or have been intimate partners or family members is a Safeguarding Children matter.

- has more repeat victims than any other crime (on average there will have been 35 assaults before a victim calls the police). 44% of victims of domestic abuse are involved in more than one incident (Crime in England and Wales 2003/2004).
- claims the lives of two women each week and 30 men per year (Criminal Statistics, Home Office)
- will affect 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men in their lifetime (Council of Europe, 2002) with women at greater risk of repeat victimisation and serious injury (89% of those suffering four or more attacks of domestic abuse are women) (Home Office, 2007, Domestic Violence: A MP's Guide).
- affects nearly three quarters of children on the 'at risk' register (Department of Health, 2002).
- is influenced by alcohol in 39 per cent of incidents (Crime in England and Wales 2006/7);
- costs in excess of £23 billion a year through taxes paid for public services, lost economic output due to time off work, and the human and emotional costs to those suffering the abuse. (Walby, Sylvia (2004). The Cost of Domestic Violence. Women and Equality Unit: London).

3 The Policy Framework

Nationally, domestic abuse is recognised as a cross-cutting issue that needs to be embedded in targets within crime reduction, community safety, public health, homelessness and child protection. The following list highlights the range of national and local policies which impact on our responses to domestic abuse.

3.1 National Legislation, Guidance and Strategies:

- National Domestic Violence Reduction Plan and Co-ordinated Community Response
- New Performance Framework for Local Authorities
- Forced Marriage Unit and Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007
- Sexual Violence and Abuse Action Plan April 2007
- Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Adoption and Children Act 2002
- Children Act 2004 and Every Child Matters
- Home Office: Guidance for Domestic Homicide Reviews under the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Children, Young People and Maternity Services (2004)
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- The Women's Mental Health Strategy (2002 -03)
- Homelessness Act 2002

3.2 Local Strategies:

- Local Area Agreement - the 'Safer' block for Warwickshire
- Children and Young People's Plan
- Supporting People Strategy

- Warwickshire's Mental Health Strategy for Women 2003-2007 (revised May 2005)
- The Alcohol Harm Reduction strategy for Warwickshire (2006-2009)
- Police Violence Reduction Strategy and Domestic Abuse Improvement Plan.
- Homelessness Strategies.

4 Responsibility for Tackling Domestic Abuse

The Local Government Association document "Local Government's role in tackling domestic violence (2006)" concludes that Local Authorities have a corporate responsibility to deal with domestic violence by:

- Agreeing a corporate strategy to tackle domestic violence and meet the needs of the community (including setting budgets)
- Developing domestic violence employment policies for their staff
- Training relevant staff, both front-line and decision makers
- Providing publicity to raise awareness and increase access to local services.

In addition, Home Office Guidance on multi-agency working recommends that every authority publish a clear policy on domestic violence, which is understood and complied with by its entire staff.

5 Domestic Abuse in Warwickshire

5.1 Data and Trends

In Warwickshire from April 2006 – March 2007, there was a total of 6,755 incidents of domestic abuse recorded by Warwickshire Police. This is an increase of 76.5% on the same period in the previous year.

5.2 Costs

Domestic abuse costs on average £13,000 per incident, the total cost in Warwickshire last year was over £87 million (Walby, Sylvia (2004). The Cost of Domestic Violence, Women and Equality Unit: London).

6 Domestic Abuse Service Provision

6.1 Background

Warwickshire has traditionally provided a range of services for families experiencing domestic abuse and has continued to keep pace with the changing focus on responses whilst maintaining a strong support base for victims and their children.

6.2 Current Service Provision

Refuges

There are refuges for women and their children across the county, run by voluntary organisations, and in many cases funded by Supporting People. There is also a refuge specifically for Asian women and their children.

Warwickshire Domestic Violence Support Service (WDVSS)

WDVSS is the main voluntary agency providing advice, counselling and support to victims and their children. The service is mainly funded by Supporting People.

Victim Support

Victim Support provides advice and counselling to victims of domestic abuse across the county and is predominantly funded through government grants.

Domestic Abuse Counselling Service (DACS)

DACS provides counselling to victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse. The current pilot voluntary perpetrators programme is funded by Warwickshire County Council.

Victim and Witnesses Information Partnership (VIP)

VIP was set up by Warwickshire Police to improve the experiences of victims and witnesses in their seven priority areas, including domestic abuse.

Warwickshire Probation

The Probation service delivers the government approved Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP) for perpetrators convicted of relevant offences. Perpetrators are monitored for mandatory attendance on the programme.

Helpline and Outreach Support Service

Warwickshire County Council has provided funding for a pilot helpline number and outreach worker available county wide. Callers are signposted to appropriate service providers through the county council's Customer Services Unit. Funding is initially agreed until March 2008. The effectiveness of the Helpline service will be monitored to determine its sustainability and good value for money. Behind the helpline sits a WDVSS outreach worker who receives direct referrals from the helpline, other agencies, and victims. The Outreach worker undertakes an initial risk assessment of the level of intervention required and refers on for support, refuge or other provision.

Sanctuary Scheme

This scheme was developed as a result of funding available from Government Office West Midlands, using a voluntary organisation, Coventry and Warwickshire Community Safety Scheme, to install security measures in a home, once the domestic abuse perpetrator has left the property. The family can then remain in their home instead of going to a refuge or becoming otherwise homeless.

Specialist Domestic Violence Court

Warwickshire Specialist Domestic Violence Court (SDVC) started in October 2007, opening a fast track for perpetrators charged with domestic abuse offences. Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) are required alongside SDVCs in order to support victims through the judicial process. Funding is currently being sought for the IDVA role.

Alcohol and Domestic Abuse

LPSA2 pump priming funding has enabled Swanswell Charitable Trust to set up a pilot project through until March 2008, specifically to work with victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse who have alcohol problems.

Domestic Abuse Social Workers

Two specialised Social Workers offer work with children and their parents around domestic abuse, its effect and consequences. Children's services are committed to maintaining these specialised roles and closely monitor the service.

Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

This initiative is designed to reduce the number of domestic abuse related homicides. The aim is to bring together agencies who work with families experiencing domestic abuse, to review cases referred to the conference, based on a risk indicator model and to provide a package of support to reduce the risk. Protocols and procedures are being developed in order to implement MARACs in the near future.

7 Warwickshire's Values

Warwickshire County Council and partner agencies are committed to the following values:

- Domestic abuse is never acceptable.
- Challenging domestic abuse is everyone's responsibility.
- The safety of victims and children is paramount.
- Consultation with people who have experienced domestic abuse will inform services.
- Services need to be responsive to the needs of diverse families and communities.
- Offending needs to be reduced and perpetrators challenged and made accountable for their behaviour.

8 Warwickshire's Aims

Our aim is to enable those experiencing domestic abuse to make changes in their lives through the provision of structured support. In particular we aim to:

- Prevent and reduce the incidents of domestic abuse across Warwickshire, to reduce repeat victimisation and to protect victims and their children from abuse.
- Provide an empathetic and supportive response to victims and their children from all appropriate agencies and consult with service users on the quality and appropriateness of services provided.

9 Key Objectives (and Targets)

Please note that strategic targets for reducing incidents of Domestic Abuse are currently under discussion with partners as part of the development of the second Warwickshire Local Area Agreement. These are not therefore included here, but will be added to the final draft of the strategy once they are agreed

Five key objectives for this strategy have emerged, based on consultation, best practice, needs analysis and experience. They are:

9.1 Safety and Support

To ensure that the safety and support needs of those experiencing domestic abuse are met through well-resourced, safe, accessible services.

9.2 Protection and justice

To ensure that perpetrators are held accountable through a co-ordinated response, which does not compromise the safety of victims and children.

9.3 Prevention and early intervention

To reduce incidents of domestic abuse and ensure that it is confronted and challenged so that victims, perpetrators and families can access services earlier.

9.4 Children and young people

To ensure children and young people who have witnessed domestic abuse are able to access appropriate services and that children and young people are given the skills to build relationships based on respect and equality.

9.5 Co-ordinated response

To ensure that agencies work together to provide a co-ordinated and co-operative response that meets the needs of victims of domestic abuse and their children and challenges perpetrators.

10 Desired Outcomes for the Key Objectives

10.1 Safety and Support

To ensure that the safety and support needs of those experiencing domestic abuse are met through well-resourced, safe, accessible services.

What we want to achieve	How we will achieve it
Sustainability of existing core domestic abuse services	Partner agencies agree services to achieve our strategic aims eg Specialist Outreach Service
Training for agency workers/service providers	A programme of training should be made available to cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • awareness of DA, • the impact on children • working with diverse communities
Improve services to diverse communities	A review of current services available to victims from diverse/hard to reach communities should be undertaken
Continue to respond to housing/homelessness issues.	WCC and borough/district councils should work to ensure responses to homelessness across the county
Workforce DA Policy – support for workers who are experiencing DA	Partners should develop a project to introduce DA policies within the work place.

Enable victims to recover from the abuse they have suffered	Options for developing survivor group work should be explored
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10.2 Protection and Justice

To ensure that perpetrators are held accountable through a co-ordinated response which does not compromise the safety of victims and children.

What we want to achieve	How we will achieve it
Increase the rate of DA reporting	Partners should undertake co-ordinated awareness-raising campaigns encouraging victims to approach DA support services and to take full part in criminal justice system where possible.
Increase the rate of prosecutions in DA cases	We should ensure provision of a specialised domestic violence court including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) • DA training for criminal justice staff
Programmes for Perpetrators	We should review the existing provision of work with perpetrators, and develop a sustainable programme of work for perpetrators including appropriate support for victims and children.
Improve and increase level of multi agency work in this area and reduce the risk of DA homicides	Police and partners should instigate and monitor Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs).

10.3 Prevention and early intervention

To reduce incidents of domestic abuse and ensure that it is confronted and challenged so that victims, perpetrators and families can access services earlier.

What we want to achieve	How we will achieve it
Earlier intervention by support services	We will encourage victims to disclose abuse earlier in the relationship by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ordinated campaigns raising awareness of the issue and the support available • Provision of an appropriate first point of contact – helpline • Training of front line staff in health, family support, children’s services <p>Partners should consider the development of a programme of routine questioning by relevant workers supported by appropriate protocol and training for staff.</p>

10.4 Children and young people

To ensure children and young people who have witnessed domestic abuse are able to access appropriate services and that children and young people are given the skills to build relationships based on respect and equality.

What we want to achieve	How we will achieve it
Identify children and young people who are living with DA	We should aim to provide training for relevant education, health and family/children support staff on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • awareness of DA • enabling recognition of markers • encouraging and receiving disclosure • making appropriate referrals
Ensure a consistent level of appropriate services is available for children and young people across the county	We should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expand the current specialised counselling service and group work for children who have witnessed DA to ensure access across the county. • ensure specialised work for children temporarily living in refuge accommodation. • develop a referral protocol/DA policy for schools and other child/family focused services.
Provide 'positive relationship' work for children and young people	We should work with schools, youth and specialised support services to ensure development and delivery of work which can be integrated into the curriculum and reflects a whole school/organisation approach to positive relationships, ensuring that support is available for any young person affected.

10.5 Co-ordinated response

To ensure that agencies work together to provide a co-ordinated and co-operative response that meets the needs of victims of domestic abuse and their children and challenges perpetrators.

What we want to achieve	How we will achieve it
Ensure that all agencies have a commitment to delivering this strategy for DA	All partners should encourage agencies to 'sign up to' and work towards achieving the strategic aims identified in this document.
Ensure involvement of front line staff in delivery and development of services	Partners should sustain forums and develop links between forums and the strategic group to ensure consistency of approach.
Streamline and improve data sharing, information provision and referral pathways	Partners should review existing data provision arrangements and recommend improvements to systems.

11 Emerging issues

A number of gaps in service provision have been identified which will be addressed in the annual action plan. These include improved data collection and analysis, work with perpetrators and better provision for children affected by domestic abuse.

Other issues are beginning to emerge, which will also need to be included in the action plan include:

- The sustainability of domestic abuse work over time and resources available
- The need to build capacity within agencies in order to deliver domestic abuse within mainstream budgets
- National guidance that sexual abuse will need to be built into domestic abuse workstreams
- New methods of collecting evidence and information eg headcams and cameras for incident recording

A scoping exercise will be required to investigate best practice elsewhere for inclusion in the action plan each year.

12 Monitoring arrangements

The monitoring of progress of the strategy and the annual action plan will be the responsibility of Warwickshire County Council's Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Other agencies will receive regular reports on the progress of the strategy and action plan. The Domestic Abuse Strategy will be reviewed in 2011 with an annual performance review of each 12 month Action plan

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