

**North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership - Executive**

**7 January 2010**

**Domestic Abuse: Update Report**

**1 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To provide the NYSP Executive with an update on strategic issues within the County in relation to domestic abuse.

**2 Background**

- 2.1 At its meeting of 30 April 2009 the NYSP Executive agreed to take a strategic lead in prioritising and raising the profile of domestic abuse prevention in North Yorkshire.
- 2.2 To this end, the Executive would receive an update report at alternate meetings of the Executive (typically six monthly) over the subsequent two years, commencing with a report to the June 2009 meeting setting out the strategic planning and delivery components in place at the time and to highlight areas where improvements could be made.

**3 Strategic planning and delivery of domestic abuse prevention in North Yorkshire**

- 3.1 The following components of planning and delivery were considered at the June 2009 meeting:
- Data collection
  - Policies and procedures
  - Co-ordination
  - Information sharing and joint decision making
  - Partnership working
  - Services
  - Monitoring and review

Key issues and developments against the above components, where applicable, are set out as follows:

**3.2 Data collection**

- 3.2.1 Relevant data is continuing to be collected through the Police and Supporting People. Police data includes incident data and repeat incidents. Supporting People data relates to homelessness presentation as a result of domestic violence and the origin of those using refuges in the county.

- 3.2.2 In addition to the data already collected, all areas are now using the same data collection database for Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) (see paragraph 3.5.1).

### **3.3 Policies and procedures**

- 3.3.1 The overall strategic direction for domestic abuse prevention work is contained in the York and North Yorkshire Domestic Abuse Strategy. Since the last meeting it has come to light that the 2008-11 version of the Strategy has been reviewed, refreshed and relaunched as the 2009-13 version. An executive summary of the Strategy is appended to this report.
- 3.3.2 Whilst the content and general thrust of the Strategy appears to be appropriate and the longer timeframe more useful from a strategic perspective, the decision making gateway through which the Strategy passed during its development and consultation process prior to its launch, require attention. For example, the strategy was launched at an event in York on 18 November 2009. The Safer Communities Forum was not formally consulted about either the content of the strategy or the arrangements for its launch. Enquiries are currently being made as to why this occurred given that the Domestic Abuse Joint Coordinating Group (which is the body that led on the development of the Strategy) is itself part of the Safer Communities Forum,
- 3.3.3 The Safer Communities Forum will be considering the revised Strategy at its next Forum meeting in March 2010 and the Chair of the Safer Communities Forum will be making separate enquiries to ensure clarity of responsibilities amongst interested parties and associated processes moving forward.
- 3.3.4 Work is also needed to gain an understanding regarding whether employers have sufficient and functional procedures in place for providing support to employees who may be experiencing domestic abuse. A pilot to develop a 'champions' scheme is being developed and piloted in Hambleton and Richmondshire and, if successful, could be used as a best practice model to share.

### **3.4 Co-ordination**

- 3.4.1 Members of the NYSP Executive may recall that four Domestic Abuse Co-ordinators are in post for Harrogate/Craven, Scarborough/Ryedale, Hambleton/Richmondshire and Selby/York areas, but all currently have different employing authorities, and slightly different job descriptions and grades. The fragmented and ad-hoc funding arrangements which have been in place for these posts for a number of years has led to uncertainty and difficulty in forward planning, together with staff retention and recruitment problems. Access to data can also be an issue for those Co-ordinators not employed by the Police.
- 3.4.2 Following confirmation received at the last NYSP Executive meeting that NHS North Yorkshire and York would not be making a contribution to the funding of the Domestic Abuse Coordinator posts, as originally hoped, alternatives have been explored and an interim solution reached. In the short term, the NYCC and NY Police will each contribute a third (circa £50k each) of the costs, with

the remaining third being secured from a top slice of the allocation of Area Based Grant to the Safer Communities Forum.

It should be noted that this is an interim solution and further consideration is being given to achieving a sustainable arrangement over the long term.

- 3.4.3 A further point of note concerning the Domestic Abuse Strategy is in regard to arrangements currently underway to align the Domestic Abuse Coordinators under a single employing entity; this will be the Police. Once achieved, greater co-ordination and standardisation of approach in delivering the agreed Domestic Abuse Strategy is likely to follow.
- 3.4.4 It is already acknowledged within the NYSP structure that the subject of domestic abuse is of direct interest to other thematic partnerships, not least Children and Young People, and Adults, where joint awareness and coordination of activity is important. A similar level of awareness needs to be achieved and maintained on those fora that sit outside the NYSP structure, for example, the Local Criminal Justice Board and the Safeguarding Boards if partnership effort and performance is to be improved further.

### **3.5 Information sharing and joint decision making processes**

- 3.5.1 Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) are in place across the county. The role of a MARAC is to facilitate, monitor and evaluate effective information sharing to enable appropriate actions to be taken to increase public safety.
- 3.5.2 A review of MARACs in North Yorkshire is continuing and all areas have now received their first visit from Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA) who are nationally recognised as best practice for MARACs across the country. Scarborough has received their second visit where CAADA attended their MARACs and the other areas are due to receive second visits in March/April 2010.
- 3.5.3 The information sharing protocol and procedures has now been drafted and a benchmarking exercise carried out against the CAADA has been undertaken. The protocol and procedures are now out for consultation with partners. Once the consultation process is finalised and agreed the intention is to standardise procedures in line with current best practice, both nationally and locally.
- 3.5.4 North Yorkshire Police continue to deliver their recently merged community protection, vulnerable persons, child protection and public protection units to form Protecting Vulnerable Persons Units (PVPs). There will be 4 of these units across the county – in Northallerton, Scarborough, York and Harrogate. Each of these units have a dedicated Detective Inspector and it is intended where possible, to build resilience by sharing intelligence and specialist skills.

### **3.6 Partnership working**

- 3.6.1 Partnership working is facilitated through the structures and processes which have already been mentioned. One important component of partnership working in North Yorkshire is Making Safe which has now been rolled out across City of York and North Yorkshire. This is a multi agency initiative

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supporting victims of domestic abuse to remain safe within their own homes at the same time as challenging the offender's behaviour.

- 3.6.2 Co-ordination of Making Safe is facilitated by the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinators and is therefore subject to the limitations mentioned within 3.4.
- 3.6.3 It has been agreed to develop Specialist Domestic Violence Courts in the Harrogate, Skipton and Northallerton Courts. A multi agency working group led by the Local Criminal Justice Board has been set up to develop this further. Independent Domestic Violence Advisors are set up in all areas.

### **4 Recommendations**

- 4.1 That the NYSP Executive note the content of the report and consider:
  - a. The Strategic priorities as set out in the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2009-13 for feeding back to the Safer Communities Forum, and
  - b. Further improvements to strategic coordination between those partnerships within and outwith the auspices of the NYSP in respect of Domestic Abuse.

**Nigel Hutchinson**

Chair of York & North Yorkshire Safer Communities Forum

16 December 2009