



Leicestershire County Council

Domestic Violence Strategy 2007-2008

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Domestic Violence Strategy

Introduction

Tackling Domestic Violence (DV) continues to be a key national and Leicestershire priority. Reducing levels of domestic violence has been a continuing theme within the County Council's Community Safety Plan. Building on a previous Leicestershire Public Service Agreement domestic violence target (concluded in 2006), there is now a domestic violence 'reward' target within the Safer Communities Block of the Leicestershire Local Area Agreement (LAA).

The scale of the problem

Domestic Violence is a particularly prevalent and damaging crime, which affects, on average, one in four women in their lifetime. It is also the violent crime least likely to be reported to the police, as illustrated by the following points:

According to British Crime Survey (BCS) 2005/06:

- *DV accounts for approximately 15% of violent crime nationally, accounting for 31% of all violence against women*
- *On average, two women a week are killed as a result of DV*
- *One incident of DV is reported to the police every minute*
- *Extrapolating from the British Crime Survey statistics, it can be estimated that every year at least 29,000 women living in Leicestershire will experience domestic violence*

The hidden nature of domestic violence:

- *Only a fifth of those who reported domestic violence to the BCS told the police*
- *Whilst it is the most common form of violence against women, it still remains under reported.*
- *The priority given to family honour by many survivors stop them from publicly exposing the violence and exploitation they are suffering*

Domestic Violence covers offences ranging from common assault to rape and murder as well as on-going emotional, financial and psychological abuse, all

of which have a massive impact on victims, their children and the wider community.

Effect on children

At least 750,000 children each year witness domestic violence and nearly three quarters of children on child protection registers live in households where domestic violence occurs. Research evidence shows that domestic violence has a negative affect on children's and young people's physical safety, health, school attendance, educational attainment, economic well-being and emotional development. In the most extreme cases children are at risk of serious injury or death.¹ It is recognised that the protection of children and young people is paramount. Every attempt will be made to ensure that children remain with their parent(s) and long term carers, but child protection issues must be considered when children and young people are witnessing domestic violence.

Costs of Domestic Violence

Nationally it is estimated that the total cost of domestic violence is over £23 billion a year. This total includes costs to the state, employers, as well as the human and emotional cost for victims. There are clear direct costs to statutory agencies in the region of £3 billion caused by the burdens on the police, health, housing, social services, the wider criminal justice system and the courts. The social and economic cost of the murder of women through domestic violence is calculated at £1.1million per death.²

National and Local Policy

The Government is committed to helping prevent domestic violence, improving the support and protection for victims and their children and bringing perpetrators of this crime to justice.

The strategic approach for this work is set out in the Government's Safety & Justice Consultation Paper on Domestic Violence 2003 and in "Domestic Violence – A National Report 2005".

The Domestic Violence, Crime & Victims Act 2004, the Children Act 2004 and the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (section 120 implemented 2005) provide a legislative framework to direct this work, whilst the needs of children affected by domestic violence are also highlighted in Every Child Matters: Change for Children 2004, the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services 2004 and Safeguarding Children in Education 2004.

¹ Vision for services for children and young people affected by domestic violence – guidance to local commissioners of children's services, Local Government Association 2005

² The Cost of Domestic Violence, Sylvia Walby (University of Leeds) September 2004 DTI Publications

Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, all agencies have a duty to work together to tackle crime, including domestic violence, and help bring perpetrators to justice. Leicestershire County Council recognises the seriousness of domestic violence and works closely with key partners including criminal justice agencies, the health service, district councils and the voluntary and private sectors to address this issue. Domestic Violence is a 'reward' target within the Leicestershire Local Area Agreement with the objective of increasing reporting of domestic violence incidents and reducing offences committed by repeat offenders.

Under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 the County Council has a duty to take into account reducing crime and disorder in carrying out all its functions. The County Council recognises that as a direct provider of services it has an important role in providing support to service users who may be affected by domestic violence, and has policies and procedures in place to ensure this.

This domestic violence strategy represents the County Council's commitment to tackling the problem of domestic violence and to overcome the impact of it. It provides clear direction for this work, with each department being responsible for the implementation of the strategy as appropriate to its particular services. This strategy forms part of the wider Community Safety Plan, which is aligned to the Leicestershire Local Area Agreement (Safer Communities Block).

Definition

The definition of domestic violence for the purpose of this strategy is:

'Domestic violence involves the misuse of power and is based on a range of control mechanisms, which include: physical, sexual, psychological, social or economic abuse or neglect of an individual by a partner, ex-partner, carer or one or more family member, in an existing or previous domestic relationship. This is regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, religious, cultural or political beliefs, ethnicity, disability, HIV status, class or location'. (Leicester Domestic Violence Forum)

The inclusion of family members in the definition recognises issues of major concern to black and minority ethnic (BME) communities such as forced marriage, so-called 'honour crimes' and female genital mutilation.

It also recognises the experiences of disabled people and their carers and people from the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community who may be abused by family members because of their sexuality or gender identity. Survivors from marginalised groups are likely to have less positive experiences of seeking help and less success in protecting themselves and their children from domestic violence.

Compared with men, women are more likely to experience domestic violence at some point in their lives, suffer higher rates of repeat victimisation, are more likely to be seriously injured and seek medical help and are more likely to experience frightening threats and to be frightened.³ However, the definition adopted by the County Council recognises that men are abused by their women partners and that domestic violence can affect lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities. It is also acknowledged that domestic violence is perpetrated by extended family members, to parents by their children and that young people are subjected to relationship abuse in their teenage years.⁴

Equality of Access

The County Council is committed to working to reduce disadvantages, discrimination, and inequalities of opportunity, and promote diversity in terms of the people we serve, our workforce, the partners we work with and the services we deliver.

The Domestic Violence Strategy Equality Impact Assessment considers ways in which we can ensure that all people are able to access domestic violence services and that these services are provided appropriately to meet their needs.

Domestic Violence outreach services now cover all areas of the County, improving access for survivors living in isolated rural areas.

Vision and Strategic Goals

It is our vision to reduce domestic violence through working in partnership to prevent domestic violence, and by providing support and protection to anyone who has been, or may be, affected by domestic violence.

Our key priorities which will enable us to achieve our strategic goals are as follows:⁵

Priority 1 – Prevention

Looking at ways to change attitudes, particularly those of young people, and ensuring that information about domestic violence is widely available.

Our main objectives are to:

- develop and deliver healthy relationships & domestic violence education to children and young people

³ Mirrlees-Black C, Mayhew P & Percy A (1996)

⁴ Home Office, Domestic Violence: A National Report (March 2005)

⁵ Priorities and objectives developed with Leicester City DV Co-ordinator and aligned with City priorities

- identify and offer support packages to children, young people and adults affected by domestic violence
- increase adults' basic understanding of domestic violence issues and signpost them to resources available.
- increase organisations' understanding of the picture of domestic violence locally.

Priority 2 – Support

Support needs to be available for those who have experienced domestic violence either as children or adults, to limit the potential harmful impact of the experience. Supporting children and young people can improve their behaviour and relationships. Support to adult survivors leads to an increased satisfaction with the criminal justice system, improved brought to justice outcomes and improved safety.

Our main objectives are to:

- acknowledge the issues of domestic violence and take appropriate responsibility for the welfare of their service users and employees.
- engage actively in partnership work on domestic violence, including making a commitment to the Domestic Violence Delivery Group at the appropriate level.
- ensure that there is appropriate, sufficient and good quality specialist and general provision available for people affected by domestic violence.
- build a strong evidence base of the extent of domestic violence, the needs of survivors, witnesses and perpetrators and of positive outcomes for all those affected and accessing services.

Priority 3 – Protection

Minimising the risk to survivors and their children by effectively using child protection and safeguarding adults procedures and offering services, underpinned by effective risk management, which will reduce re-offending

Our main objectives are to:

- ensure that those aware of domestic violence, suffering from domestic violence or perpetrating domestic violence have access to assistance at an early stage.
- provide staff development opportunities to ensure that employees working with the public have the skill, knowledge and confidence to identify domestic violence and take appropriate measures.
- improve the identification and management of risk in order to reduce the risk of further harm to survivors, their children and other witnesses; this includes the appropriate use of child protection and safeguarding adults procedures

- promote multi-agency systems and protocols for risk management and safety planning of high risk domestic violence victims.

Monitoring Performance

The Strategy will be monitored in the following ways:

A standardised monitoring form has been introduced, which is used by agencies funded by the County Council and collects information about the types of people using domestic violence services, will monitor the level of resources used by individuals, and to identify gaps in services.

The Domestic Violence Co-ordinator will provide a quarterly report to the LAA DV Delivery Group and the County Council's Corporate Community Safety Group on strategy progress. These reports will also be sent to district DV forums.

An annual review of the Strategy will be undertaken by the domestic violence co-ordinator reporting back to the Local Area Agreement Domestic Violence Delivery Group.

Specific targets will be monitored on a quarterly basis through Service Level Agreements with organisations that have been commissioned by Leicestershire County Council.

The Way Forward

A detailed Action Plan sets out clear areas of work with measurable outputs to monitor the progress and success of the strategy based on the priorities identified above.

The objectives identified within the Action Plan have been developed in consultation with key partners through the district domestic violence forums, Leicestershire Forum Co-ordinating Group, Local Area Agreement Domestic Violence Delivery Group and Leicester City Council Domestic Violence section. The objectives represent how the County Council intends to tackle domestic violence by working internally and with partner agencies to ensure a consistent response to domestic violence across the County.

The Leicestershire County Council Domestic Violence Co-ordinator will take the strategic lead in developing and implementing the Strategy and Action Plan by working with departments of the County Council and with district domestic violence forums and other relevant bodies. The Local Area Agreement (LAA) Domestic Violence Delivery Group will monitor the LAA delivery plan and any departmental action plans which address domestic violence within their own services

The Strategy also links into district Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships' domestic violence strategies and delivery plans which are implemented by the district domestic violence forums.

District and Borough councils are responsible for delivering the broad range of domestic violence related provisions identified in BVPI 225. The County Council is committed to supporting the district domestic violence strategic partnerships and providing multi-agency domestic violence training across the County.

Domestic Violence Strategy
(County Council Action Plan 2007/08)

Prevention

Objective	Action	Lead	Timescale
1.1 Develop and deliver education related to domestic violence and healthy relationships to children and young people	Healthy relationships sessions with young people are delivered in 3 new secondary schools and participants are more aware of DV, its causes and that it is a crime.	DV Policy assistant/ CYPS	September 2007 – March 2008
	Increase the number of staff who are trained to deliver healthy relationships sessions with young people	DV Policy assistant/ CYPS	September 2007 – March 2008
1.2 Increase adults' basic understanding of domestic violence issues and signpost them to resources available.	Use 2007 DV awareness campaign to raise public awareness of DV issues and publicise resources available (supports LAA Reward Target)	DV Co-ordinator, Departmental DV Leads	Campaign held week 26 th – 30 th November 2007
1.3 Increase the County Council and partner organisations' understanding of the picture of domestic violence locally.	Use 2007 DV awareness campaign to raise practitioners and staff awareness of DV and specialist organisations	DV Co-ordinator, Departmental DV Leads	In week 26 th – 30 th November 2007

Support

Objective	Action	Lead	Timescale
2.1 Ensure that there is appropriate, sufficient and good quality specialist and general provision available for people affected by domestic violence	Sufficient and appropriate outreach services for survivors to be funded through mainstream LCC and LAA resources through implementation of LAA delivery arrangements and participation in LAA DV Delivery Group Exit strategies developed with partner organisations providing short term funded outreach services.	DV Co-ordinator / CYPS / ASCH / SP DV Co-ordinator	Ongoing By March 2008
2.2 Build a strong evidence base of the needs of victims, survivors, witnesses and perpetrators and the extent to which positive outcomes are achieved for those accessing services.	Outreach services for survivors to be monitored as part of SLAs with partner organisations Evaluate the effectiveness of collaborative work with the Libraries Service Recommendations on service improvement from research into increasing reporting by University of Teeside considered.	DV Research Officer DV Policy Assistant/ Libraries DV Co-ordinator	Ongoing By June 2007 By December 2007
2.3 Promote the welfare employees who are subject to DV.	Develop a County Council DV Employment Policy	DV Co-ordinator / HR	By December 2007

Protection

Objective	Action	Lead	Timescale
3.1 Ensure that those suffering from domestic violence or perpetrating domestic violence have access to assistance at an early stage.	DV Helpline for survivors & perpetrators supported and funded through mainstream LCC resources.	DV Co-ordinator	To the end of March 2008
	Regular monitoring as part of Service Level Agreement with DVIRP	DV Research Officer	Quarterly
3.2 Provide staff development opportunities to ensure that employees working with the public have the skill, knowledge and confidence to identify domestic violence and take appropriate measures.	Materials developed to enable Domestic Violence Awareness to be included within the common core induction training for the Children's Workforce.	DV Co-ordinator/ CYPS	During 2007/08
	Update Schools DV Protocol	DV Co-ordinator/ CYPS	By September 2007
	Training sessions delivered to LCC and partner agency staff	DV Co-ordinator CYPS, CS, ASCH, YOS	Ongoing
3.3 Improve the identification and management of risk in order to reduce the risk of further harm.	Partner agencies and LCC departments make use of new risk assessment tool and its use is monitored.	DV Co-ordinator / Research Officer CYPS, CS, ASCH, YOS	Ongoing
3.4 To share information with other agencies appropriately to reduce the risk of further harm.	Make use of Information sharing protocol by partner agencies and LCC departments and monitor its use.	DV Co-ordinator/ Research Officer CYPS, CS, ASCH, YOS	Ongoing

3.5 Promote multi agency risk management and safety planning for high risk domestic violence survivors	Make use Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) for high risk survivors, ensure relevant protocols are in place and monitor their use.	DV Co-ordinator / Research Officer CYPS, CS, ASCH, YOS	Ongoing
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