

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SELECT COMMITTEE: DOMESTIC ABUSE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Select Committee: Domestic Abuse held in the Stour Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 23 February 2012.

PRESENT: Mr J D Kirby (Chairman), Mr H J Craske, Mrs T Dean, Mr S C Manion, Mrs E M Tweed and Mr A T Willicombe

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs S Frampton (Research Officer) and Mrs C A Singh (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Election of Chairman

(Item 1)

Mr Manion proposed, Mr Willicombe seconded, Mr J D Kirby as Chairman of this Select Committee.

Agreed without a vote

Mr J D Kirby took the Chair

2. Mrs Elizabeth Green

(Item 2)

RESOLVED that Mrs E Green co-option to the Select Committee be noted.

3. Proposed Terms of Reference, Scope and list of Stakeholders

(Item 4)

1. The Chairman invited Ms Frampton to introduce the report. Points raised included the following:

- Domestic abuse was the number one killer of women aged 19-44.
- There were female 7 domestic homicides in Kent so far in this financial year.
- Up to a third of all female suicide attempts relate to experience of domestic abuse and up to a half of women in prison have experience domestic abuse.
- The effect on young children was long lasting. Nationally at least 750,000 children a year witnessed domestic abuse.
- The current definition of domestic abuse by the Home Office is:
'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'.
- It needed to be made clear that domestic abuse was not a "bad relationship" and did not refer to one off incidents.
- The financial cost of domestic abuse to Kent is estimated at £381 million per year.

2. The Members were given the opportunity to make comments and ask questions which included the following:

Scope of the Review

- a) Members wanted the review to reflect that domestic abuse can also be suffered by other groups such as males, same sex couples, people with learning disabilities and elderly people.
- b) There were groups of people that were unlikely to report domestic abuse such as military and gypsies where they often can come up against a whole community.
- c) It was suggested that the review looked at the provision for young children and teenagers suffering the affects of domestic abuse and what support was available to them.
- d) A comment was made that evaluating the training received by neighbourhood police officers on domestic abuse will become essential with the loss of the specialist domestic violence units and police officers following the recent police reorganisation.
- e) It was suggested that the value of the various services for abusers and the abused needed to be evaluated and monitored.
- f) It was suggested that the review looked into the provision available for perpetrators who needed psychiatric care.
- g) It was felt that it would be essential to look at the funding for the voluntary sector and KCC's commissioning.
- h) It was suggested that the service pathways for medium and standard risk cases was far less clear and would need to be part of the review.
- i) The Senior Research Officer advised that there had already been a review of domestic abuse services for children and young people. The Select Committee agreed that this review would not duplicate that work.

The Review Process

- j) It was suggested that the review should link in with Freedom Programme.
- k) Members agreed that they needed to be able to ensure anonymity to those that require it throughout this review.

Additional written and oral evidence from witnesses

- l) It was suggested that Community Wardens, Relate, Youth Tutors and KCC Preventative Services Managers be included on the list of witnesses.

Requests for Further Information

- m) A request was made for information on Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and the One Stop shops, which Ms Frampton agreed to forward to Members outside the meeting.
- n) Members considered that it would be helpful to have data on domestic abuse in Kent. Ms Frampton agreed to forward National statistics and those from the Police and (MARAC).

Public Involvement

- o) Members advised that they would like the review publicised via media and through the Community Engagement Officers. Ms Frampton agreed to produce the advertising material with the assistance of experts.

3. RESOLVED that:

- a) the Terms of Reference and the general approach to the review on Domestic Abuse in Kent as set out in the report be agreed, subject to the comments and suggestions made by Members in paragraph 2 above, be noted; and
- b) Mr Kirby be authorised to agree programme development on behalf of the Committee with the Committee being kept informed by email, be noted.

4. Dates for Hearings and Visits (Verbal report)

(Item 5)

1. Ms Frampton sought Members' views on a host of training and preparatory work to be arranged for April and May before the Select Committee carried out its evidence gathering from witnesses in June and July.

2. RESOLVED that:

- a) A half day training session to be organised for Wednesday, 18 April either am or pm. Mr Kirby, Mr Craske, Mrs Dean, Mrs Tweed and Mr Willicombe indicated their availability for this date be noted.
- b) A list of Multi-agency Domestic Abuse One Stop Shops in the county, with the times and dates they take place, during May, be circulated to the Committee outside the meeting. It was agreed that each Member would make one visit to a venue of their choice and where possible the Senior Research Officer will attend be noted;
- c) Arrangements be made for Members to attend the Specialist Domestic Violence Courts (SDVC) in Maidstone and Margate. Mrs Tweed and Mr Kirby indicated that they would be available to visit Margate SDVC on Tuesday, 1 May in the morning. Mr Craske, Mr Willicombe and Mrs Dean indicated that they would be available to attend the SDVC in Maidstone on Wednesday, 16 May in the morning, be noted;
- d) Arrangements be made for one or two Members to attend a meeting of ex-domestic abuse service users in Thanet on Wednesday, 16 May in the morning. Mr Kirby indicated that he would like to attend. The Senior Research Officer would write to the Committee outside the meeting to seek one more attendee;
- e) An evening visit to be arranged for Members to observe a Probation session with a group of domestic abuse perpetrators (by video - not in the room);
- f) The Senior Research Officer agreed to circulate an open invitation to an event at Rochester Cathedral on Friday, 13 April to remember victims of domestic abuse, be noted; and

- g) Members who were not present at the meeting be advised of the invitations to visits and training sessions, be noted.

5. Administrative Arrangements (Verbal report)
(Item 6)

RESOLVED that:

- a) the correspondence, including briefing material from the Senior Research Officer and Democratic Services Officer to the Select Committee Members be sent via email entitled "Domestic Abuse Select Committee"; and
- b) Members agreed to give their availability for June and July so that the hearing dates can be arranged for witnesses as part of the Select Committee's evidence gathering be noted.