

By: Sue Frampton, Senior Research Officer (Policy Overview & Scrutiny)

To: Domestic Abuse Select Committee

Subject: Domestic Abuse in Kent

Date: 23 February 2012

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Summary: To discuss and agree proposed Terms of Reference, Scope and general approach for the Review

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## 1 Introduction

Domestic abuse, which once had almost tacit acceptance by society, provided it remained behind closed doors, is now recognised for the pervasive, morally repugnant and criminal behaviour that it is. An understanding of the complexity of the issue, its scope, root causes and impact on the health and wellbeing of individuals and families is necessary to inform public policy that is both proactive and responsive.

The terms 'domestic violence' and 'domestic abuse' tend to be used synonymously. The government's (non-statutory) definition of domestic violence 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'.*

A Home Office consultation is currently under way to determine whether the definition should remain the same or be extended further to include coercion and/or victims aged 16/17 or all those under the age of 18.

According to Women's Aid:

*'... domestic violence is physical, psychological, sexual or financial violence that takes place within an intimate or family-type relationship and forms a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour. This can include forced marriage and so-called 'honour' crimes. Domestic violence often includes a range of abusive behaviours, not all of which are, in themselves, inherently 'violent' - hence some people prefer to use the term 'domestic abuse' rather than 'domestic violence'.*

It is important to remember that domestic abuse is not a 'one-off' incident or occurrence but a more frequent and persistent 'pattern' of behaviour. Definitions are moving away from a focus on incidents towards one of impacts. A holistic approach to domestic abuse addresses both these impacts and the root causes, both short and long term.

## **2 Committee Membership**

2.1 The Select Committee consists of nine Members of Kent County Council:

Mrs Ann Allen  
Mr Harold Craske  
Mrs Elizabeth Green (Lab – co-optee)  
Mr John Kirby (Chairman Designate)  
Mr Steve Manion  
Mrs Elizabeth Tweed  
Mrs Carole Waters  
Mr Alan Willicombe  
Mrs Trudy Dean (Lib Dem)

## **3 Draft Terms of Reference (TOR)**

- (1) To investigate breaking the vicious cycle and impact of domestic abuse in Kent, focusing on equitable access to support for victims and the efficacy of perpetrator programmes in reducing repeat victimisation and repeat offending.
- (2) To examine co-ordination and collaboration within and between statutory and voluntary agencies, with a particular focus on delivering efficient services and maximising safety while reducing negative impacts of organisational change in key organisations.
- (3) To make recommendations for Kent County Council and partner organisations (having explored funding options and feasibility) in order to improve outcomes for, and reduce long term damage to, individuals and families affected by domestic abuse.

## **4 Draft Scope**

- (1) To investigate breaking the vicious cycle and impact of domestic abuse in Kent, focusing on equitable access to support for victims and the efficacy of perpetrator programmes in reducing repeat victimisation and repeat offending:
  - Types and stereotypes - incidence of abuse (including female perpetrators, abuse within same-sex relationships, younger people in relationships, abuse of older persons by spouse/child)
  - Provision of Healthy Relationship work in schools
  - Access to services – reaching vulnerable groups, postcode lottery
  - Sustainability of support/resourcing of front-line services
  - Perpetrator programmes– effectiveness/evaluation/different models
  - Civil and legal remedies and the role of Specialist DV Courts
  - Relationship between substance misuse and incidence of domestic abuse
- (2) To examine co-ordination and collaboration within and between statutory and voluntary agencies, with a particular focus on delivering efficient

services and maximising safety while reducing negative impacts of organisational change in key organisations.

- New structures for early intervention work in Children's Services – inter-agency referral processes, thresholds and responses, family interventions (contact issues)
  - Risk assessment, Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) capacity and referral pathways for medium and standard risk domestic abuse cases
  - Information sharing and communication between agencies
  - Domestic Abuse Multi-agency One Stop Shops
  - New policing model (Changes to Public Protection Unit/no specialist DV Officers)
  - Training and awareness (domestic abuse/safety) among front-line workers
- (3) To make recommendations for Kent County Council and partner organisations (having explored funding options and feasibility) in order to improve outcomes for, and reduce long term damage to, individuals and families affected by domestic abuse.

#### 4 Proposed Timetable

<b>Jan/ Feb</b>	Research and preparation. Identification of stakeholders/ witnesses.
<b>23<sup>rd</sup> Feb</b>	First Meeting of Select Committee to elect the Chairman, discuss and agree: TOR, potential witnesses and timetable
<b>March/April</b>	Publicise review, contact witnesses, arrange hearings and visits
<b>April/May</b>	Prepare briefings. Formulate questions for witnesses. Apply for written evidence. (Potential also to hold Member training sessions and/or visits during this period.)
<b>June/July</b>	Hearings and visits
<b>End July</b>	Committee meets to identify key issues and make recommendations.
<b>Aug/ Sept</b>	Report writing
<b>Sept/ Oct</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> draft to Select Committee for comment and amendment
<b>October</b>	Meeting to discuss report with key stakeholders and agree any amendments. Final report signed off by committee.
<b>October</b>	Report shared with relevant Cabinet Members
<b>November</b>	Report presented to relevant Cabinet Advisory Committee
<b>November</b>	Executive Summary report to Corporate Management Team (CMT)
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Dec</b>	Executive summary report presented to Cabinet
<b>13<sup>th</sup> Dec</b>	Report presented to County Council
<b>Monitoring: March 2013</b>	Directorate to agree action plan and share with Cabinet Advisory Committee or equivalent
<b>December 2013</b>	Reconvene Select Committee to evaluate impact of recommendations and respond.

## **5 Evidence Gathering**

### **5.1 Briefings and training**

Briefings and information gathered by the Research Officer will be provided to Members throughout the review.

It is suggested that in addition to the proposed timetable Members may wish to take part in 2 half days of training/orientation e.g. Introductions to MARAC and the Freedom Programme (a programme for survivors of domestic abuse). Visits to engage with survivor groups could also take place prior to hearings.

### **5.2 Data:**

Detailed domestic abuse data is produced monthly by Kent Police including MARAC data on high risk cases. Children's Social Services data has been requested. Home Office data collections and the British Crime Survey (BCS) are also relevant. Data produced for indicators used by the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy Group (KMDASG) to inform the Strategy will also be obtained. Performance monitoring data is available in relation to some domestic abuse services.

### **5.3 Written and oral evidence from witnesses:**

Hearings will usually take place over a morning or an afternoon and be open to the public unless there is a requirement for a closed session. The Committee may need to adopt a flexible approach in order to gain the participation of particular stakeholders in light of the sensitive nature of the topic. It may also be preferable to conduct some visits with fewer members reporting back to the committee.

Written evidence will be requested from a range of stakeholders and may also be requested to supplement oral evidence sessions.

It is suggested that the following individuals/organisations are approached to provide information in person or in writing (this is a draft list and is likely to change):

- Alison Gilmour – Domestic Violence Co-ordinator (based within Kent Police)
- Davina James Hanman, Director – AVA (Against Violence and Abuse)
- Lesley Devonport - Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Policy Lead, Government Office for the South East
- Domini Gunn-Peim – Director of Public Health and Vulnerable Communities, Chartered Institute of Housing
- Dr Greg Ussher – Metrocentre, Greenwich
- Sue Dunn, Dunn Training and Consultancy
- Mark Richardson – Thanet Community Safety Partnership (and Kent CSP Co-ordinator)
- Lorraine Lucas - Beaumont House
- KCC Senior Officers (Community Safety, Children's Social Services, Supporting People, Safeguarding, Parenting Programmes, DV work in Schools)

- Medway Council and District Councils (inc Velia Coffey, Deputy CE, Canterbury City Council)
- Freedom Programme (originator and local facilitators)
- Kent Safe Schools (Thanet, Dartford and Gravesham)
- Kent Health Trusts (including A&E QEQM, Dorothy Ryan (Specialist DV Health Visitor), Eastern & Coastal Kent NHS)
- Mental Health Services (DV Lead for Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust)
- Kent Drug and Alcohol Action Team (KDAAT)
- Jess Mookherjee – Assistant Director of Public Health, Public Health Specialist
- MARAC (Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference) Co-ordinators
- District Domestic Violence Forum Chairs
- Refuge providers
- Academics - known experts on domestic abuse
- Voluntary Sector Support Organisations (national and local) including CAADA, Canterbury Domestic Violence Project, Homestart (Sam Taylor – Folkestone), Domestic Abuse Volunteer Support Services, Oasis Domestic Abuse Service (Dennis Stone), Rape Crisis Centre (South East), Respect, Rising Sun Domestic Violence Project, St. Giles Trust, Victim Support, Women's Aid, Women's Support Service)
- IDVA host organisations and IDVAs (Independent Domestic Violence Advisors)
- Kent Police (Head(s) of Neighbourhood Policing, Head of CRU, officers with previous experience of Domestic Abuse Unit), Detective Superintendent Marie Shepherd (retiring head of PPU)/Tim Smith
- Probation Service
- Specialist Courts
- Citizens Advice Bureaux (Maidstone Vice Chair Sharon Hawkins)
- Legal Advisor (Mr Mike Edwards, Dover Magistrates)
- Local businesses/representative organisation

#### **5.4 Potential visits**

Domestic Abuse Multi-agency One Stop Shops  
Survivor Groups  
Perpetrator Group  
Children's Centre  
Specialist DV Court  
Refuges

Members may wish to undertake rapporteur work, for example by visiting their local 'One Stop Shop' and reporting back to the group. A template for information gathering could be provided if required.

#### **5.5 Public Involvement**

It is proposed that members of the public, including perpetrators and survivors of domestic abuse, are invited via media advertising to give their views and that Community Engagement Officers are asked to publicise the review at local meetings.

## **5.6 Other Relevant work**

A review of services for children affected by domestic abuse was commissioned by KMDASG and reported in 2010. It will be important not to duplicate the work already done with regard to services for children though changes since the report was written may be highlighted by the current review. A key finding of this work was that a 'Think Family' approach was required and current developments including those associated with centralisation of Kent Children's Services would indicate this approach is now being taken.

A Task and Finish Group appointed by the Kent & Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy Group (Executive) will be looking at issues around sustainability of Independent Domestic Abuse Advisor (IDVA) services. The research officer will liaise with this group to ensure there is no duplication of effort.

## **5.7 Project Risks**

Reorganisations within key agencies including KCC directorates, Health Trusts, Public Health and Kent Police mean that some individual roles will have changed and it may be necessary to engage officers who have moved on to different roles to gain insight into particular issues.

Publicity for the review will need to have a specific focus in order that the response can be managed and incorporated appropriately in the Select Committee's work.

Engagement with members of the public/services users who have experienced domestic abuse will need to be at their own discretion/upon the advice of professionals involved in their support in order to maintain appropriate safeguards.

### **Recommendations:**

1. To agree the Terms of Reference and general approach to the review of Domestic Abuse in Kent; and
2. To authorise Mr Kirby to agree programme development on behalf of the Committee with the Committee being kept informed by email.

### **Contacts:**

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