

County Durham Domestic Abuse Strategy 2008-2011

1. Introduction

Domestic abuse is a serious crime, the impact of which cuts across all social, geographical and cultural groups. It is a crime largely perpetrated in private, with few witnesses and as a consequence is under reported and under recorded. In County Durham domestic abuse is defined as:

“Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults, aged 18 or over, who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender and sexuality. (Family members are defined as mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister and grandparents, whether directly related, in-laws or step family).”

It must also be remembered that to fully understand the issue of domestic abuse, it is important not just to focus on the specific individual incidents, but on the abuser’s sense of entitlement and the patterns of power and control that underpin their behaviour.

Men, those in same sex relationships and in the transgender community, experience domestic abuse. Gender is an issue in domestic abuse, in that the gender of the victim and perpetrator influences the behaviour of both. For example male perpetrators are more likely than female perpetrators to abuse post separation. Women victims of male perpetrators are more likely to be repeatedly abused or murdered. Research indicates that one in four women and one in six men will be a victim of domestic abuse. This suggests a level of parity; however, what these figures conceal is the fact that the 47% of males experienced a single incident, with an average of seven incidents per victim, compared with 28% of female victims experiencing a single incident, with an average of 20 incidents per victim (Walby and Allen 2004).

In recent years there has been a significant amount of activity in the domestic abuse sector both at a local and national level. It is an issue that is now firmly on the public and political agenda. At a national level the Government introduced the National Domestic Violence Delivery Plan in 2005, which has been reviewed on two occasions. The five key outcomes of the plan are:

- To reduce the number of domestic violence related homicides.
- To reduce the prevalence of domestic violence, particularly in high incidence areas and /or communities.
- To increase the rate of reporting for domestic violence particularly in high incidence areas and /or communities.
- To increase the rate of reported domestic violence offences that are brought to justice, particularly in high incidence areas and/or communities, as well as in areas with high attrition rates.
- To ensure that victims of domestic violence are adequately protected and supported nationwide.

The objectives agreed in 2007/08 reflect the move towards developing a Coordinated Community Response and are:

- To increase the early identification of - and intervention with – victims of domestic violence by utilising all points of contact with front-line professionals.
- To build capacity within the domestic violence sector to provide effective advice and support to victims of domestic violence.
- To improve the criminal justice response to domestic violence.
- To support victims through the Criminal Justice System and to manage perpetrators to reduce risk.

The importance of addressing domestic abuse as an issue is reflected across County Durham. We have seen the issue firmly embedded in the Community Safety Partnership structure; a project being progressed by the County Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee; further development of outreach services for adults and children; and the implementation of a voluntary perpetrator programme.

This is the second Countywide domestic abuse strategy. It builds on the progress in addressing the issue by partners in the voluntary and statutory sectors across the County. It sets out the next stages for further developing the work to address the problem.

Scale of the Problem

The County Durham Community Safety Board and Community Safety Partnerships completed a strategic assessment for domestic abuse in December 2007. This assessment identified that there was an increase in referrals to the police; that 18% of reported domestic disturbance incidents are subsequently reported as a crime; and that 1 in 6 wounding offences were directly attributable to a domestic incident. As a consequence domestic abuse has been identified as a priority for the Community Safety Partnerships. From April 2007 to March 2008 there were 6,993 incidents reported to the police, broken down by Partnership area below.

Partnership Area	Reported Incidents	Rate per 1,000 Population
Durham /CLS	1574	11.13
Derwentside	1196	14.06
Easington	1725	18.35
Sedgefield	1478	16.95
Wear and Tees	1020	11.89

An Overview of Current Specialist Services Contributing to a Coordinated Community Response in County Durham

A range of services from the universal to specialist are provided for and to victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse, by both the voluntary and statutory sectors, The following is not an exhaustive list of services provided but an overview of the more specialist services provided specifically for victims and perpetrators.

Refuges

Refuge provision is the cornerstone of any specialist provision for female victims and children. The refuges not only provide safe accommodation, but also children's services and outreach support services. There are four refuges in County Durham; Durham Women's Aid; Peterlee Refuge; Terentia House in Derwentside and Wear Valley Women's Aid.

Outreach Support Services for Adults and Children

Each borough/district has an outreach support service provided either by the council or independent charities. Individual emotional and practical support is offered to victims of domestic abuse. The services in Easington, Derwentside, Sedgefield and Wear and Tees also have specialist children's workers who provide one to one support.

Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) Domestic Abuse Scrutiny Panel

As part of a national initiative, the CPS has developed a domestic abuse scrutiny panel. The panel is made up of representatives from the voluntary and statutory sectors. The aim of the panel is to act as a critical friend to the CPS, scrutinising cases and making recommendations with a view to improving outcomes for victims in the criminal justice system.

Specialist Domestic Violence Courts

As part of a central government initiative County Durham and Darlington have achieved specialist domestic violence court status. Cases of domestic violence are heard in the three specialist courts in Newton Aycliffe, Consett and Peterlee. They have improved the prosecution of such cases and are ranked as three of the best performing courts in the country. To compliment the criminal justice response and to achieve specialist status, a number of components have to be in place, these include having MARAC; voluntary perpetrator programmes and independent domestic violence advisors (see below for more detail).

Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC)

MARAC is currently being piloted in Easington. MARAC in a single multi agency meeting combines up to date risk information with an assessment of the victims needs, with a view to providing appropriate interventions to all of those involved, victim, children and perpetrator to reduce the level of risk.

Independent Domestic Violence Advisor's

There is currently one IDVA bases with the police domestic violence unit in Easington. The role of the IDVA is from the point the perpetrator is charged with an offence to offer advice and help to the victim with a view to maintaining support for the prosecution through the criminal justice process.

Voluntary Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme

This is a 32-week rolling programme, run out of Bishop Auckland police station. Male perpetrators self refer or initial contact can be made through any

agency in County Durham. The programme conforms to the County Durham and Darlington Minimum Standards for Perpetrator Programmes, and has associated women and children's support.

Domestic Violence Intervention Programme

This is the court-mandated programme for male perpetrators provided by the National Probation Service, County Durham.

Homicide Review Board

The homicide review board is a multi agency board with the remit to initiate reviews of domestic homicide cases, with a view to making recommendations that will contribute to learning to prevent further homicides.

Sexual Abuse Referral Centre (SARC)

Research indicates that there is a strong link between domestic violence and sexual assault. The SARC in County Durham provides a safe location where victims of sexual assault can receive medical care and counselling. As well as being referred by the police, victims can self refer.

Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)

MAPP arrangements are led by the probation service and are multi agency meetings, which seek to provide risk assessment and risk management interventions for high-risk offenders in the community.

Vision

The strategic vision is for all agencies to work together to seek to reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse in County Durham and to develop a coordinated community response that provides high quality support and protection services for those experiencing and witnessing domestic abuse.

2. Purpose of the Strategy

This strategy is intended to be an over-arching strategy for County Durham and covers the period 2008/11. It has been prepared in consultation with partners in the voluntary and statutory sectors. Its purpose is to provide a framework to ensure the active contribution of partner agencies to the enhancing, strengthening and development of services to reduce domestic abuse and support the large number of adults and children whose safety and well being are affected in our communities.

3. Links to Other Plans and Strategies

The strategy links to and compliments a wide range of other national and local documents and strategies. These include:

National

- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- National Domestic Violence Plan (Home Office)
- National Community Safety Plan 2008/11 (Home Office)
- National Policing Plan 2006/09 (Home Office)
- Saving Lives, Reducing Harm, Protecting the Public – An Action Plan for tackling Violence 2008-11
- Cross Government Action Plan on sexual Violence and Abuse 2007
- Human Rights Act 1999
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Children Act 2004
- Working Together 2006
- Responding to domestic abuse – a handbook for health professionals

Local

- County Durham Strategic Vision
- County Durham Community Safety Agreement 2008/09
- Community Safety Partnership Plans
- Supporting People Strategy
- Police Authority Strategy and Policing Plan
- County Durham and Darlington Core Strategy Group Action Plan 2005/06
- Children and Young People Plan 2006/09
- Youth Justice Plan
- Local Area Agreement
- Service Level Agreements
- District Authorities Homelessness Strategies
- Statement of Principles and Minimum standards for Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes
- Child Protection Procedures
- Alcohol Strategy
- Police Domestic Violence Strategy
- Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedures
- Family Support Strategy

Children and Young People

The Every Child Matters Agenda is an important development, which is of particular note. The government is moving forward on this agenda through the Change for Children Programme. County Durham is committed to this Programme and has developed the Durham 5 Outcomes Framework. The Outcomes incorporated into the vision and values are that children and young people will:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution, and:
- Achieve economic well-being

These Outcomes form the basis of the Children and Young people Plan and have a clear role to play in addressing the negative impact that domestic abuse has on children and young people.

4. Under-Served Communities

There is currently no specialist domestic abuse service provision for people from ethnic minority communities in County Durham. Agencies are currently not able to provide information as to the scale of the issue within these communities. There is a clear need to develop information systems to inform how agencies can meet the needs of these victims and survivors, and to raise awareness of these issues in communities.

An emerging issue in County Durham is that of forced marriage and so called 'honour' based violence. The constabulary are currently engaged in awareness raising in the force through training and linking regionally with Cleveland and Northumberland. Support agencies will need to develop their services to respond to the particular needs of those affected by these issues.

There continues to be a lack of specialist domestic abuse services for people with disabilities, substance misuse problems, mental health issues and those from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender communities in County Durham. Holistic and coordinated interventions have been found to be most effective when there are multiple issues involved. There is a clear need to develop existing or new services to meet the needs of these groups.

5. Principles that Underpin this Strategy

- Domestic abuse is a crime and occurs in all sections of our community.
- Services need to be flexible to take account of individual need, but sufficiently standardised to ensure a similar response in similar circumstances.
- The safety of survivors and children must be a paramount consideration at all times. It must be recognised that interventions have the potential to be dangerous and even fatal.
- Effective services are those that offer support and increase choice and the focus needs to be on what can be offered to increase safety.
- It is the responsibility of the community and state institutions to reduce and eliminate domestic abuse, not the abused person.
- Domestic abuse is a deliberate violation of a person's human rights.
- Domestic abuse is best understood as a pattern of behaviour designed to achieve power and control rather than as a single incident or series of incidents.
- Survivors need to be an integral part of seeking solutions to the issue.
- There is significant research evidence to highlight the fact that domestic abuse is an issue of inequality. It is most commonly perpetrated by men towards women. However it is recognised that it can happen in same sex relationships and by women to men.
- There is a strong correlation between domestic abuse and child abuse.

6. Strategic Priorities

This strategy will be delivered through a targeted annual countywide action plan based on a number of strategic priorities, governed by the County Durham Domestic Abuse Executive Group. Individual agencies and organisations will have their own action plans that will contribute to the delivery of local priorities as well as to the countywide plan. The countywide strategic priorities, what we will do now, what we will work towards and how we will measure our success, are outlined below.

Priority 1: To provide safe and accessible support services to victims and children of domestic abuse.

What we will do in 2008/09

- Ø Support the delivery of outreach services
- Ø Support the continued funding of refuge provision
- Ø Review the service delivery model as part of the Local Government Review arrangements
- Ø Improve data collection to identify need
- Ø Develop a performance management framework with outcome measures

What we will work towards for 2009/11

- Ø Providing a consistent premium service delivery model across the county which is victim focused
- Ø Develop minimum common core standards for service delivery for adults and children
- Ø Providing specialist outreach children's services across the county
- Ø To develop better integration of services supporting victims, including alcohol and substance misuse service

Our measure of success 2008/09

- Ø The number of victims accessing services
- Ø The number of children accessing services
- Ø The retention rates of those accessing services
- Ø The review of service provision completed and recommendations implemented
- Ø Data collection improved
- Ø Performance management framework developed

Priority 2: To ensure perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse are held accountable for their behaviour

What we will do in 2008/09

- Ø Support the delivery of the court mandated Domestic Violence Intervention Programme
- Ø Support the delivery of the voluntary perpetrator programme in Bishop Auckland
- Ø Continue to support the Specialist Domestic Violence Courts
- Ø Support the provision of an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate in Easington
- Ø To support the Crown Prosecution Service Domestic Violence Scrutiny Panel

What we will work towards for 2009/11

- Ø Delivery of the perpetrator programme from a location in the north of the county
- Ø Employing Independent Domestic Violence Advisors to cover the Specialist Domestic Violence Courts in Newton Aycliffe and Consett

Our measure of success 2008/09

- Ø The number of charges that result in a prosecution
- Ø The number of offenders convicted in court
- Ø The number of men completing the voluntary perpetrator programme
- Ø The number of men completing the court mandated perpetrator programme
- Ø The number of repeat offenders

Priority 3: To reduce the number of domestic violence related homicides

What we will do in 2008/09

- Ø Support the Homicide Review Board
- Ø Support the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) pilot in Easington
- Ø Implement the Information Sharing Protocol for MARAC
- Ø Provide training/awareness of MARAC and MAPPA arrangements

What we will work towards for 2009/11

- Ø Roll out MARAC across the rest of the county
- Ø Develop a protocol for potentially dangerous persons

Our measure of success 2008/09

- Ø Developing a baseline to measure the reduction in the number of repeat victims in the MARAC process
- Ø The % of the county covered by MARAC
- Ø The number of domestic violence related homicides
- Ø The number of domestic violence related serious assaults and attempted murders

Priority 4: To increase awareness of the extent and impact of domestic abuse within local communities and across agencies and increase the rate of reporting

What we will do 2008/09

- Ø Support the media campaigns to highlight issues relating to domestic abuse
- Ø Organise an annual county conference
- Ø Support the delivery of domestic abuse awareness training

What we will work towards for 2009/11

- Ø Developing a coordinated countywide communication strategy
- Ø Developing a coordinated countywide media campaign
- Ø Developing a standardised rolling programme of domestic abuse training
- Ø Developing an County Durham accreditation scheme for service/programmes/training delivery

Our measure of success 2008/09

- Ø The number of media campaigns
- Ø The number of people attending the county conference
- Ø The number of incidents reported to the police either directly or through a third party

Priority 5: To address issues of funding relating to domestic abuse services

What we will do 2008/09

- Ø Review current funding streams for specialist domestic abuse services and identify gaps and risks
- Ø Consider a business case including funding arrangements as part of Local Government Reorganisation
- Ø Consider a business case for the funding of MARAC and IDVA's

What we will work towards for 2009/11

- Ø Developing a needs led, commissioning model to funding specialist services

Our measure of success 2008/09

- Ø Review of funding arrangements is completed
- Ø Business cases are considered and agreed recommendations for funding are implemented

7. Key Objectives

Partner agencies agree to work together:

- To ensure the safety of victims of domestic abuse is afforded priority.
- To promote as unacceptable, any act of domestic violence and abuse wherever it occurs.
- To develop a strategic action plan that is specific, measurable, achievable, and realistic with timescales.
- To support and enable the delivery of services for victims who have been or are experiencing domestic abuse with a view to increasing reporting and reducing repeat victimisation.
- Work in partnership to develop and share good practice which meets the needs of people experiencing domestic abuse.
- To ensure issues of equal opportunities and access are integrated into all work undertaken in relation to domestic abuse.
- To promote and safeguard the welfare of children experiencing or witnessing domestic abuse.
- To raise awareness within schools and other agencies of domestic violence and abuse issues and the impact on children and young people, to enable staff to provide an appropriate response to disclosure and on-going support.
- To develop and disseminate, through practical courses and resources, to enable education staff to address domestic abuse issues within the curriculum.
- To recognize the impact domestic abuse has on health inequalities and ensures linkages are made within NHS and Local Authority planning processes when addressing this issue.
- To ensure safe emergency and move on accommodation is available for those requiring re-location.
- To ensure perpetrators are brought to justice.
- To implement and monitor work with perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse.
- To develop and evaluate the effectiveness of Specialist Domestic Violence Courts.
- To promote the development of specialist services for children.
- Encourage service providers to consult with victims of domestic violence and abuse to help shape service provision wherever possible.
- To initiate the development, production and delivery of awareness raising and multi-agency training programmes and to identify gaps.
- To collectively consider policy and practice issues.
- To develop commonality of approach where this is appropriate.
- A minimum level of service delivery is developed across the county.

8. Monitoring and Reporting

The strategy and supporting action plan will be managed and monitored by the County Durham Domestic Abuse Forum Executive Group on behalf of the County Durham Community Safety Board. The action plan will be reviewed on an annual basis and will inform the following year's action plan. An annual report will be prepared and presented to the County Durham Community

Safety Board, Local Safeguarding Children's Board and, the Local Criminal Justice Board. Individual partner agencies will disseminate the report through their management structures.

9. Resource Implications of the Strategy

It continues to be the case that service provision for domestic abuse in County Durham is supported through short term funding streams, from a variety of sources. These include:

- Durham County Council
- District/Borough Councils
- Supporting People
- Community Safety Partnerships
- County Durham PCT
- Home Office
- Charitable organisations
- Durham Constabulary

It is a resource led rather than needs led approach. As a consequence there is no consistent standard for service delivery across the county; it often means that the positive impact of interventions is time limited and not sustainable in the longer term. The issue of resources will need to be addressed if the prevalence of domestic abuse is to be reduced. It is only through the commitment of appropriately targeted resources that high quality support and protection services can be developed to effectively tackle this issue and increase the safety of a large number of adults and children in our communities.