



Warwickshire Domestic Abuse Strategy

2008-2011

This strategy was produced by Warwickshire County Council in partnership with statutory and third sector organisations working together throughout Warwickshire and in consultation with service users.

Contents

- 1 Introduction**
- 2 Definition of Domestic Abuse and National Data**
- 3 The Policy Framework**
 - 3.1 National Legislation, Guidance and Strategies
 - 3.2 Local Strategies
- 4 Responsibility for Tackling Domestic Abuse**
- 5 Domestic Abuse in Warwickshire**
 - 5.1 Data and Trends
 - 5.2 Costs
- 6 Domestic Abuse Service Provision**
 - 6.1 Background
 - 6.2 Current Service Provision
- 7 Warwickshire's Values**
- 8 Warwickshire's Aims**
- 9 Key Objectives**
 - 9.1 Safety and Support
 - 9.2 Protection and justice
 - 9.3 Prevention and early intervention
 - 9.4 Children and young people
- 10 Action Plan and Monitoring Arrangements**

1 Introduction

Domestic Abuse is not acceptable within any society.

Warwickshire has a tradition of providing good support for those experiencing domestic abuse in the county. Over recent years, a number of innovative responses have been trialled, some having more success than others. However, lessons can be learnt from all these initiatives and these lessons are reflected in this document.

There is a commitment from all relevant agencies to a more joined-up multi-agency way of working. This document aims to provide a joint vision and a strategic framework to enable this commitment to be put into action in order to provide improved services in Warwickshire.

It is accepted that there is a need to provide a wide-ranging support network for families experiencing domestic abuse, and that much of this support has to be provided by non-statutory independent agencies for whom short-term, restricted funding challenges their capacity to provide and develop services.

Delivery of the key objectives will be achieved through annual action plans. These will need to recognise that some actions can be achieved quickly, whilst others may develop over the three years of the strategy. Whatever the time scale, the commitment of Warwickshire County Council and its partners to the achievement of these aims is essential.

2 Definition of Domestic Abuse and National Data

Domestic abuse is defined as: 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 sexuality¹.

Domestic abuse is rarely a one-off incident and should be seen as a pattern of abusive and controlling behaviour through which the abuser seeks power over their victim. It occurs across the whole of society, regardless of age, gender, race, sexuality, disability, religion, class, or lifestyle and income. However, data shows that the majority of domestic abuse is perpetrated by men against women.

Crimes committed in the name of 'honour', forced marriage and female genital mutilation are also considered acts of domestic abuse (Home Office, 2007, Domestic Violence: A MP's Guide).

Domestic abuse is under reported. It is estimated that only 40 % of domestic abuse is reported to the police (Crime in England and Wales 2003/2004).

¹Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those under 18 who are or have been intimate partners or family members is a Safeguarding Children matter.

However, current national data shows that domestic abuse:

- accounts for 16% of all violent crime – 33% of violent incidents against women were domestic violence, compared with 6% of incidents against men (Crime in England and Wales 2006/07)
- has more repeat victims than any other crime - on average there will have been 35 assaults before a victim calls the police. 44% of victims of domestic abuse are involved in more than one incident (Crime in England and Wales 2003/2004)
- claims the lives of two women each week and 30 men per year (Criminal Statistics, Home Office)
- will affect 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men in their lifetime (Council of Europe, 2002) with women at greater risk of repeat victimisation and serious injury 89% of those suffering four or more attacks of domestic abuse are women (Home Office, 2007, Domestic Violence: An MP's Guide)
- affects nearly three quarters of children on the 'at risk' register (Department of Health, 2002)
- is influenced by alcohol in 39 % of incidents (Crime in England and Wales 2006/7)
- costs in excess of £23 billion a year through costs of public services, lost economic output due to time off work, and the human and emotional costs to those suffering the abuse (Walby, Sylvia (2004). The Cost of Domestic Violence. Women and Equality Unit: London).

3 The Policy Framework

Nationally, domestic abuse is recognised as a cross cutting issue that needs to be embedded in targets within crime reduction, community safety, public health, homelessness and child protection. The following list highlights the range of national and local policies which impact on our responses to domestic abuse.

3.1 National Legislation, Guidance and Strategies

- Tackling Violent Crime Action Plan 2008
- National Domestic Violence Reduction Plan and Co-ordinated Community Response
- Forced Marriage Unit and Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007
- Sexual Violence and Abuse Action Plan April 2007
- Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Adoption and Children Act 2002
- Children Act 2004 and Every Child Matters
- Home Office: Guidance for Domestic Homicide Reviews under the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Children, Young People and Maternity Services (2004)
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- The Women's Mental Health Strategy (2002 -03)
- Homelessness Act 2002

3.2 Local Strategies

- Local Area Agreement - the 'Safer' block for Warwickshire
- Children and Young People's Plan
- Supporting People Strategy
- Adult Mental Health and Wellbeing: A Strategy for Warwickshire 2008-2011
- Older People Mental Health and Wellbeing: A Strategy for Warwickshire 2008-2011
- The Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy for Warwickshire (2006-2009)
- Warwickshire Police Violence Reduction Strategy
- Warwickshire Police Domestic Abuse Improvement Plan
- Warwickshire Police Sexual Violence Action Plan
- Warwickshire Police Forced Marriage and Honour Based Violence Strategy and Action Plan
- District and Borough Homelessness Strategies.

4 Responsibility for Tackling Domestic Abuse

The Local Government Association document "Local Government's role in tackling domestic violence (2006)" concludes that Local Authorities have a corporate responsibility to deal with domestic violence by:

- Agreeing a corporate strategy to tackle domestic violence and meet the needs of the community (including setting budgets)
- Developing domestic violence employment policies for their staff
- Training relevant staff, both front-line and decision makers
- Providing publicity to raise awareness and increase access to local services.

In addition, Home Office Guidance on multi-agency working recommends that every authority publish a clear policy on domestic violence, which is understood and complied with by its entire staff.

5 Domestic Abuse in Warwickshire

5.1 Data and Trends

In Warwickshire from April 2007 – March 2008, there were a total of 7,554 recorded incidents of domestic abuse. This is an increase of 14.5% on the same period in the previous year, and an increase of 88.9% on the same period 2005 - 2006.

5.2 Costs

Domestic abuse costs on average £13,000 per incident. Using these figures, the total cost in Warwickshire last year was over £98 million (Walby, Sylvia (2004). The Cost of Domestic Violence, Women and Equality Unit: London).

6 Domestic Abuse Service Provision

6.1 Background

Warwickshire has traditionally provided a range of services for families experiencing domestic abuse and has continued to keep pace with the changing focus on responses whilst maintaining a strong support base for victims and their children.

6.2 Current Service Provision

Refuges

There are refuges for women and their children across the county, run by voluntary organisations, and in several cases funded by Supporting People. There is also a refuge specifically for Black, Minority Ethnic and Refugee (BMER) women and children.

Warwickshire Domestic Violence Support Service (WDVSS)

WDVSS is the main voluntary agency providing advice, counselling and support to victims and their children. Housing related floating support, funded by Supporting People, is provided to victims of domestic abuse via WDVSS.

Victim Support

Victim Support provides advice and counselling to victims of domestic abuse across the county and is predominantly funded through government grants.

Domestic Abuse Counselling Service (DACS)

DACS provides counselling to victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse.

Victim and Witnesses Information Partnership (VIP)

VIP was set up by Warwickshire Police to improve the experiences of victims and witnesses in their seven priority areas, including domestic abuse.

Warwickshire Probation

The Probation service delivers the government approved Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP) for perpetrators convicted of relevant offences. Perpetrators are monitored for mandatory attendance on the programme.

Helpline and Outreach Support Service

Warwickshire County Council has provided funding for a pilot helpline number and outreach worker available county wide. Callers are signposted to appropriate service providers through the Council's Customer Services Unit. Behind the helpline sits a WDVSS outreach worker who receives direct referrals from the helpline, other agencies, and victims. The outreach worker undertakes an initial risk assessment of the level of intervention required and refers on for support, refuge or other provision.

Sanctuary Scheme

This scheme was developed as a result of funding available from Government Office West Midlands, using a voluntary organisation, Coventry and Warwickshire Community Safety Scheme, to install security measures in a home, once the domestic abuse perpetrator has left the property. The family can then remain in their home instead of

going to a refuge or becoming otherwise homeless. Long term funding for this scheme is being sought.

Specialist Domestic Violence Court

Warwickshire Specialist Domestic Violence Court (SDVC) started in October 2007, opening a fast track for perpetrators charged with domestic abuse offences. Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) are required alongside SDVCs in order to support victims through the judicial process. A tendering process to establish the IDVA service is underway.

Alcohol and Domestic Abuse

Area Based Grant supports the Swanswell Charitable Trust to deliver a service in the north of the county for victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse who have alcohol problems.

Domestic Abuse Social Workers

Two specialised social workers offer work with children and their parents around domestic abuse, its effect and consequences. Children's services are committed to maintaining these specialised roles and closely monitor the service.

Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

This initiative is designed to reduce the number of domestic abuse related homicides. The aim is to bring together agencies who work with families experiencing domestic abuse, to review cases referred to the conference, based on a risk indicator model and to provide a package of support to reduce the risk.

7 Warwickshire's Values

Warwickshire County Council and partner agencies are committed to the following values:

- Domestic abuse is never acceptable.
- Challenging domestic abuse is everyone's responsibility.
- The safety of victims and children is paramount.
- Consultation with people who have experienced domestic abuse will inform services.
- Services need to be responsive to the needs of diverse families and communities.
- Offending needs to be reduced and perpetrators challenged and made accountable for their behaviour.

8 Warwickshire's Aims

Our aim is to enable those experiencing domestic abuse to make changes in their lives through the provision of structured support. In particular we aim to:

- Prevent and reduce the incidents of domestic abuse across Warwickshire, to reduce repeat victimisation and to protect victims and their children from abuse.

- Provide an empathetic and supportive response to victims and their children from all appropriate agencies and consult with service users on the quality and appropriateness of services provided.

9 Key Objectives

Four key objectives for this strategy have emerged, based on consultation, best practice, needs analysis and experience. They are:

9.1 Safety and Support

To ensure that the safety and support needs of those experiencing domestic abuse are met through well-resourced, safe, accessible services.

9.2 Protection and justice

To ensure that perpetrators are both supported to change their behaviour and held accountable through a co-ordinated response, which does not compromise the safety of victims and children.

9.3 Prevention and early intervention

To reduce incidents of domestic abuse and ensure that it is confronted and challenged so that victims, perpetrators and families can access services earlier.

9.4 Children and young people

To ensure children and young people who have witnessed domestic abuse are able to access appropriate services and that children and young people are given the skills to build relationships based on respect and equality.

10 Action Plan and Monitoring Arrangements

This strategy is supported by an annual action plan, also developed by a multi-agency working group. The action plan gives fuller detail on the milestones and outcomes to be achieved and allocates responsibility for actions.

The monitoring of progress of the strategy and the annual action plan will be the responsibility of Warwickshire County Council's Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Warwickshire Safer Communities Partnership. Other agencies will receive regular reports on the progress of the strategy and action plan.

The Domestic Abuse Strategy will be reviewed in 2011 with an annual performance review of each 12 month action plan.