

# DOMESTIC ABUSE: A STRATEGY FOR SLOUGH

2011 - 2014



## FOREWORD

Welcome to Slough's Domestic Abuse Strategy 2011-14, which has been produced by the Domestic Abuse Network. Our work is directed by the vision of the Safer Slough Partnership (SSP). The three year aim for the Safer Slough Partnership 2011-14 is 'To reduce the harm that results from crime and disorder'. Our work also contributes to the Slough Local Safeguarding Children Board's Strategic Business Plan 2011-14 where one of the priorities is 'To raise awareness in Slough of the impact of domestic abuse and work to reduce its incidence and protect children at risk of harm from its effects'.

The Slough Domestic Abuse Network is committed to tackling domestic abuse. The Network is a multi agency sub-group of the Safer Slough Partnership and is responsible for delivering the tasks outlined in this action plan and relevant tasks outlined in the Drugs and Community Safety Service Plan and the Local Safeguarding Children Board Strategic Business Plan. Members of the Domestic Abuse Network and other local partnerships have all been consulted with regarding this strategy and plan.

The purpose of the plan that accompanies this strategy is to outline how we are going to carry out our work and responsibilities from 2011-14. It will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it remains up to date and reflects the work being undertaken.

## **1. WHAT IS DOMESTIC ABUSE?**

Domestic abuse is primarily a gender based crime with research showing that it is predominately experienced by women and perpetrated by men. This strategy acknowledges however that there are male victims of domestic abuse and female perpetrators, and that domestic abuse also occurs within same sex relationships.

Home Office figures suggest that one in four women and one in six men will be affected during their lifetime.

Domestic abuse can include behaviour which is not only physical, but emotional, psychological, sexual and/or financial. Domestic abuse covers a range of circumstances where power and control is exerted by one person over another, and perpetrators will use behaviours to isolate, exhaust and degrade their victims. Domestic abuse has a devastating impact on victims and their families with considerable financial, emotional and human costs.

Many forms of domestic abuse are crimes and there can never be an excuse for them to take place. Factors such as mental health, substance misuse, culture and upbringing may influence and compound the situation or behaviour but they should never be seen as the main reason that the abuse takes place.

Domestic abuse is rarely a one off incident but rather a pattern or abusive and controlling behaviour that tends to get worse over time.

The Slough Domestic Abuse Network uses the following definition of domestic abuse, in line with the Home Office and Thames Valley Police:

“Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults, aged 18 and 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.)

## **2. THE PROFILE OF DOMESTIC ABUSE IN SLOUGH**

- Thames Valley Police responded to 3451 incidents of domestic abuse in 2010/11, equating to 9.5 reports every day.
- Reports of ‘domestic abuse recorded crime’ in Slough reduced by 10.8% and ‘domestic abuse non recordable crime’ increased by 21.3% in 2010/11, in comparison to the previous year.
- The repeat rate of victims who have been a victim of domestic abuse in the previous 12 months (reported to police) was 41.7% 2010/11, a decrease from 41.9% the previous year.
- 210 ‘high risk’ cases were managed through the MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) 2010/11, with 22% being identified as repeats.
- Vulnerable months for domestic abuse reports are July, December, August and March (according to 2010/11 reports)
- In 2009/10 Berkshire East & South Bucks Women’s Aid (BESBWA) IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor), Outreach and Women’s Safety Worker’s department received 470 new clients from the Slough area.
- The cost of domestic abuse in Slough has been estimated at £11,372,566 per year for agencies (Criminal Justice, Health Care, Social Services, Housing, Civil Legal Costs and Economic output losses) or £36,310,291 if you include the cost to the individual for human and emotional costs<sup>1</sup>.

## **3. VISION STATEMENT**

In Slough there is a commitment to address all forms of domestic abuse through partnership working, where all agencies work together to obtain the best outcome for victims and their families. Overall, there is an aim to provide a co-ordinated response to reduce the impact of domestic abuse and increase the safety of those experiencing domestic abuse through the following three priorities:

- Prevention: by challenging attitudes and behaviours that foster domestic abuse, intervening early where possible to prevent it and ensuring an effective and consistent response by trained and informed staff;
- Provision: by providing adequate levels of support for survivors including children where domestic abuse does occur;

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<sup>1</sup> Home Office ready reckoner tool, estimating the local cost of domestic and sexual violence.

- Risk Reduction and Justice Outcomes: by taking action to reduce the risk to victims and ensure perpetrators are brought to justice for their actions.

Our Domestic Abuse Action plan aims to build on the previous good work already done (see section 5), reinforces the commitment from the local partners in Slough to tackling domestic abuse and ensures that domestic abuse is seen as a local priority.

#### **4. NATIONAL CONTEXT**

The coalition government has an ambition to end violence against women and girls. The government has committed to £28million of Home Office funding for specialist services over the next four years, improving the response to rape, more training and early intervention programmes, new powers and better support for victims.

The government's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) action plan focuses on prevention, awareness raising, early identification and early intervention. The action plan was launched on 8 March 2011 to mark International Women's Day.

To view further information on the government's plans for the Violence Against Women and Girls agenda and to download the action plan, visit:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime/violence-against-women-girls/>

#### **5. LOCAL CONTEXT**

Domestic abuse cuts across all social, geographical and cultural groups and effects individuals, families and the community as a whole. Research has shown that domestic abuse will affect 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men during their lifetime. Slough has a population of 119,067 people and is a culturally diverse town with a range of communities. More than a third of Slough's population are from black and minority ethnic communities and since May 2004, Slough has seen an increase in numbers in some of the communities from Central and Eastern Europe (notably Poland). Slough also has the highest percentage of Sikh residents (9.1%) in the country, according to Census (2001) figures, and the highest percentage of Muslim (13.4%) and Hindu residents (4.5%) in the South East region.

Since the 2007-11 Domestic Abuse Strategy there have been a number of successful actions completed, including:

- Various awareness raising opportunities and materials to raise awareness of domestic abuse and signpost to services, including leaflets, posters, newspaper articles, commencement of a quarterly newsletter, domestic abuse web-pages.
- Many one day training events to increase the knowledge of professionals to ensure victims are provided with adequate support and referred to appropriate services. These sessions include an introduction course, Children and Domestic Abuse, Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference and Risk Identification.
- Developing the MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference). A MARAC has been established in Slough since 2007 which has become embedded with local partners.

- Sustaining delivery of the Freedom Programme, offering a 12 week support group for women affected by domestic abuse, run by Berkshire East & South Bucks Women's Aid.
- Sustaining the Sanctuary Scheme, offering a range of security devices to enable a victim to remain in their own home rather than move. 8 clients provided with additional security 2010/11.
- Delivery of a community based perpetrator programme called Changing Ways, in partnership with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Bracknell Forest Council and Wokingham Borough Council. 37 men from Slough were referred (self and agency referrals) with 10 men starting the programme, 4 of which completed the full 30 week programme.
- Running therapeutic groups for children who have witnessed domestic abuse (12 week programme), called PICADA – Positive Intervention for Children Affected by Domestic Abuse. 9 children attended the first two groups.
- Home Office accreditation for the Berkshire Specialist Domestic Violence Courts in 2008. The court enables police, prosecutors, courts and specialist services to work together to improve outcomes for victims in the criminal justice system.
- Development of the IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor) and Outreach service at Berkshire East & South Bucks Women's Aid. BESBWA were one of the first organisations in the country to receive Leading Lights accreditation from CAADA (Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse) in 2008.
- Thames Valley Police started using the DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and Honour Based Violence) risk indicator checklist in 2009. DASH is also used by Berkshire East & South Bucks Women's Aid, and training for partner agencies commenced in 2010 to encourage further use.
- Recruitment of a male IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor) with Berkshire East and South Bucks Women's Aid. Since August 2009, the Male project has supported 68 high risk male victims of domestic abuse across East Berkshire and 63 young males from RBWM and Slough schools have been supported through workshops and providing 1:1 direct work.
- Implementation of a Domestic Abuse policy for Slough Borough Council staff in September 2010.