

Newcastle under Lyme
Domestic Violence Strategy
2007-2010

Executive Summary

This is Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council's first domestic violence strategy effective from February 2007 – February 2010. It explains how domestic violence is receiving greater attention on both a national and political level and also highlights the legislative developments that have taken place. The strategy identifies the activities that need to be undertaken during this period by all community safety partners in order to reduce levels and effects of domestic violence on women, men and children.

The strategic framework is provided by the Newcastle Safer Communities Partnership Crime and Audit Strategy 2005 – 2008 which identifies 8 key priorities for Community Safety in the Borough and the LAA effective from April 2007. The Local Area Agreement identifies Domestic Violence as a flag-ship priority within the 'Safer and Stronger' block.

The Domestic Violence Strategy sits alongside a range of other plans and strategies such as; Housing, Homelessness, Anti-Social Behaviour and Violent Crime strategies. These strategies and plans all have a significant contribution to make in addressing Domestic Violence and building a safe and fear free Borough.

The Newcastle Safer Communities Partnership, The Newcastle Domestic Violence Action Group and the North Staffs Domestic Violence Forum will drive this Domestic Violence Strategy.

Domestic Violence has traditionally been a hidden crime and is often dismissed as "a family matter". Attitudes to this crime need to change. Victims must be encouraged to seek help and have confidence in the interventions our Borough can provide and we must recognise that this help needs to cater for varied needs. Professionals and Agencies need to instil confidence in victims that they can provide the right help at the right time and the Police and Courts should use the powers available to them.

Aims of the Strategy

- Raise awareness of domestic violence within Newcastle under Lyme
- Improve the protection for victims and their families in the Borough
- Reduce the level and impact of domestic violence within the Borough

3 Key Challenges

- Support for victims
- Prevention
- Protection and Justice

The aims and challenges of the strategy reflect local needs as identified through public consultation, the Newcastle Domestic Violence Action Group and National and local strategic plans. Focussing on these challenges will ensure a concerted, coherent and coordinated approach by all partner agencies. The strategy sets out the key issues in relation to each of these challenges, the actions we will take over the next two years and how progress will be measured.

The strategy is supported by three 12 month Action Plans which will set out how partners and the Domestic Violence Priority Action Group will address the key challenges identified and a phased approach to achieving the outcomes. The Domestic Violence Action Group and the Responsible Authorities Board will monitor progress against the Action Plan.

Introduction

The need for a strategy

Domestic Violence is a huge problem for our society; it accounts for 15% of all violent crime and will involve one in four women and one in six men at some point in their lifetimes. As a result of domestic violence, two women are murdered every week in the UK which accounts for a staggering 35% of all murders nationally.

Domestic Violence is a significant problem in Newcastle Borough, it is a wide spread social issue that causes vast amounts of suffering to a diverse range of individuals and families. No, one organisation or agency can address domestic violence in isolation; everyone has a role to play in creating a safer community where domestic violence is not accepted nor stigmatised.

This strategy has been developed with National and Regional strategies in mind, and has been developed in consultation with a wide range of statutory and voluntary sector agencies within the Borough. The aim is to focus and coordinate work on domestic violence; localised strategies are a requirement from Central Government and a direct action from the Borough's Crime Strategy. No one agency can work in isolation to truly tackle this crime, but by working in partnership we can. We would like to thank contributors for their time and expertise.

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic Violence is an extremely serious and criminal issue that has been previously stigmatised, tolerated and to some extent expected in relationships. Domestic Violence may be viewed or experienced differently in different communities but it is always unacceptable. Domestic Violence is defined by the Home Office and Newcastle Domestic Violence Action Group 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 sexuality.

Domestic Violence can take many forms such as physical assault, sexual abuse, psychological or emotional abuse, threats, destructive criticism, pressure tactics, disrespect, harassment, stalking, destruction of property and financial abuse. This list is by no means exhaustive and a victim often suffers a combination of some or all of these. Domestic Violence is any incident of these behaviours characterised by the exercise of control and misuse of power by one person over another.

Contrary to popular stereotypes, Domestic Violence crosses all boundaries. There is no typical victim of Domestic Violence, this crime occurs across society regardless of age, religion, culture, gender, race, sexuality, wealth and geography.

Unlike many other crimes, domestic violence often takes place behind closed doors, within the family or relationship and is likely to be concealed by the victim and the perpetrator from public view.

Continuing stigma means that domestic violence is under reported and therefore under recorded, this is often due to fear of reprisals, victims lack the confidence that they would be taken seriously or that effective action would be taken. Nevertheless frighteningly despite all this domestic violence still accounts for a large proportion of recorded crime in Newcastle. Children are often the forgotten victims of domestic violence, but children and young people are frequently affected and traumatised by the domestic violence that they witness and overhear. Children who live with and are aware of violence in the home face many challenges and risks that can last throughout their lives. There is often direct child abuse occurring alongside domestic violence. This means that there is a significant risk of ever increasing harm to a child's physical, emotional and social development.

There is an increased risk of children becoming victims or perpetrators of abuse themselves. There is a strong likelihood that this will become a continuing cycle of violence for the next generation. Research evidence shows that children experiencing domestic violence can be negatively affected in every aspect of their functioning, safety, health, school attendance and achievement, economic well-being and emotional development.

Using national research we can estimate the prevalence of domestic violence in Newcastle Borough. This highlights the massive importance of this domestic violence strategy.

| Research Finding | Equivalent for Newcastle Borough |
|--|---|
| 1 in 9 women experience domestic violence in one year | 6,976 women are likely to experience domestic violence in any one year in Newcastle Borough |
| 1 in 4 women experience domestic violence in their lifetime | 15,697 women are likely to experience domestic violence in their lifetime in Newcastle Borough |
| 1 in 6 men will be affected by domestic violence in their lifetime | 9,874 men are likely to be affected by domestic violence in their lifetime in Newcastle Borough |

Based on 2001 Census data.

Equality & Diversity

Newcastle Domestic Violence Action Group is committed to building a safe community in which diversity is valued and all those who live, work and visit Newcastle are treated with respect. We recognise that domestic violence cuts across all walks of life and our services will be available to meet those diverse needs.

Setting the Strategy in Context

Strategic

The Domestic Violence Strategy supports the Newcastle Safer Communities Partnership aims for Newcastle under Lyme as set out in the Crime Audit and Strategy 2005 – 2008.

"To work with communities to make the Borough of Newcastle a safe, just and tolerant society"

The National Picture

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires local government (and other key agencies) to develop, implement and deliver a three year community safety strategy and to form local crime and disorder reduction partnerships (CDRPs). The Home Office has made it clear that these partnerships should address domestic violence along with other priorities.

The Domestic Violence Crime & Victims Act 2004 gives new powers to protect victims and prosecute perpetrators, measures include; new police powers to deal with domestic violence including making a breach of a non-molestation order a criminal offence (with a five year prison penalty) making common assault an arrestable offence and making stronger legal protection for victims by extending the use of restraining orders, giving courts power to impose such orders where the defendant has been acquitted but the court believes an order necessary to protect the victim.

The 2004 Children Act imposes duties on Local Authorities to ensure local co-operation to improve well-being, to make arrangements to safeguard children and to promote welfare as well as to improve information sharing. The Adoption & Children Act 2002 amended the Children Act to define 'significant harm' as including forcing a child to witness violence and abuse.

The 2004 Children Act and the 'Every Child Matters' agenda has set out the vision for children's services for the next decade. The five outcomes are; be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well being. Children experiencing domestic violence can have their chances of achieving these outcomes significantly reduced.

Domestic Violence is steadily ascending the political agenda and has been recognised as a cross-governmental priority. This has been formalised through the formation of an Inter-Ministerial Group for Domestic Violence (IMG). The IMG performance manages the National Delivery Plan for Domestic Violence. The National Domestic Violence Strategy Reduction Delivery Plan 2005 set out what the Government intends to do to reduce the prevalence of domestic violence, to increase reporting rates, to increase conviction rates and to ensure that victims are adequately protected and supported.

In April 2005, a revised Best Value Performance Indicator on domestic violence (BVPI 225 – see appendix 1) came into force. The indicator measures 11 activities ranging from information sharing protocols to domestic violence service directories. It clearly establishes the lead role which local authorities must play in driving forward the domestic violence agenda.

Local Picture

In 2005 the Newcastle Domestic Violence Action Group was established with a view to address this crime and encourage mechanisms to reduce its prevalence. Domestic violence is the main cause of homelessness in the Borough and supporting victims to stay in their own homes should they choose to do so has been central to the interventions taken by the Council this far. We have focussed on the wider targets of increasing first time reporting and reducing repeat reporting to the Police. The Action Group draws its membership from agencies such as Staffordshire Police, Probation, Victim Support, ARCH North Staffs, NMP, NHS Health Trust, Aspire Housing, NSPCC, Staffordshire Fire Service Beth Johnson Housing and Staffordshire Housing Association.

The Action Group and partners have been responsible for a range of initiatives since its development which include:

- ✓ Specialist Domestic Violence Court for North Staffs
- ✓ Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) for North Staffs
- ✓ Multi-agency training courses delivered across Newcastle
- ✓ Newcastle Domestic Violence Directory Launch July 2006
- ✓ ARCH North Staffs have developed FREEDOM programmes for victims and perpetrators
- ✓ Varied and continuous promotion of the message – domestic violence will not be tolerated in Newcastle Borough.

The North Staffs Domestic Violence Forum has been re-established this year. The Forum is an information sharing, good practice forum covering Newcastle, Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Moorlands. The Forum is chaired by ARCH North Staffs and is complemented by a newsletter for agencies.

The Staffordshire Local Area Agreement (LAA) will come into force in April 2007. Domestic Violence is a high level outcome within the Safer and Stronger priority block. This strategy works towards the aims, objectives and interventions set out in the LAA.

The Domestic Violence Strategy supports Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council's key priorities of Community Safety and Stronger Communities. It does this through developing interventions and supporting existing mechanisms to reduce repeat cases of domestic violence, and helping to minimise the extent and impact of homelessness.

Support for Victims

What do we mean?

That systems are in place to support victims of domestic violence and their families to help them to rebuild their lives. We want to tailor our services to meet the needs of those experiencing domestic violence. Domestic Violence is the main cause of homelessness in the Borough and it is important therefore to promote existing mechanisms for victims to remain in their own home should they choose to and to align this with homelessness prevention strategies and thinking. We understand that support for victims needs to encompass work with perpetrators and work with children and the wider circle of those affected. It is important that there are services equipped to meet the needs of victims from ethnic minorities, those with disabilities, older victims, teenage and school-age victims, victims with alcohol and drug dependency, victims with mental health problems and those in same sex relationships.

What has Newcastle Domestic Violence Action Group already achieved?

- ✓ A directory of Services for Victims and Agencies produced by ARCH North Staffs was launched in July 2006.
- ✓ Supporting and promoting the North Staffs Domestic Violence Help-line which has seen continuing increase in callers.
- ✓ 2 years funding for an Outreach Service in hot-spot areas of the Borough which has seen 192 victims. This includes group-work, drop ins and one to one support.
- ✓ A Sanctuary scheme for the Borough
- ✓ Personal Alarm Project run by Aspire Housing
- ✓ A new awareness campaign designed by a Borough Graphic Art Student
- ✓ Public consultation to determine how best to tailor support

What will we focus on over the next 3 years?

We will encourage partners to make use of all available external funding to invest in accommodation, community support services and specialist support services. We will identify gaps in current service provision. Partners will work together on MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences) to ensure a reduction in high risk domestic violence cases. We will develop a co-located multi-agency team to tackle domestic violence and complement the MARAC ethos. However it is important to note that we recognise that domestic violence support work and interventions cannot concentrate on high risk cases alone and we will continue to work within our communities with a range of interventions for victims.

Key Issues

- With partners develop and invest in a comprehensive outreach support package for victims and children
- Develop a co-located team and one stop shop for North Staffordshire
- Address the complex links between domestic violence and alcohol and substance misuse
- Identify gaps in services such as the need for future services for female perpetrators, teenage victim work and alternative accommodation for male victims.

How will we know if we're making progress?

| Indicator | 06-07 – 07-08 | 08-09 | 09-10 |
|---|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Number of victim survivors accessing support service and Sanctuary scheme | 329 Victims accessing support services in Newcastle Borough 22 properties | Further Increase | Further Increase |

| | | | |
|--------------------------|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| | accessing Newcastle Sanctuary Scheme | | |
| Victims seen at MARAC | Establish baseline | Further Increase | Further Increase |

Prevention

What do we mean?

That domestic violence is prevented from happening in the first instance and reactive work is done with victims and perpetrators to prevent it recurring. We will address the continuing destructive cycle of violence in generations, challenging attitudes towards domestic violence in all sectors but particularly young people.

Tackling domestic violence can only be effective if agencies work together and develop consistent responses to violence. This can be achieved by all agencies understanding their different roles and responsibilities and by identifying and securing resources where appropriate.

What has Newcastle Domestic Violence Action Group already achieved?

- ✓ Free training for professionals on 'Understanding Domestic Violence' and 'Asian Women's Experience of Domestic Violence in 06/07.
- ✓ ARCH North Staffs have run a successful Men and Women's Freedom Programme which has seen men and women in the group work sessions
- ✓ A revised domestic violence work-place policy at Newcastle Borough Council and training for all managers
- ✓ A successful programme of events during domestic violence week for professionals and the public including training, drop-ins, public consultation, a county wide conference in partnership with Staffordshire County Council & Domestic Violence Coordinators and a sentencing event coinciding with Inside Justice Week.
- ✓ Regular talks in the Community about the effects of domestic violence and how to access help and report.
- ✓ A pilot project of domestic Violence Education Packs in partnership with Stafford Women's Aid into 2 local high schools.

What will we focus on over the next 3 years?

We will continue to raise awareness of the extent and effects of domestic violence through publicity campaigns, updated directories and work with young people in schools and colleges. We will make strategic links with other agencies to ensure that domestic violence preventative methods are in their plans and strategies.

We will encourage agencies to develop suitable policies, protocols and guidance for all employees. Newcastle Borough Council will develop a training programme for domestic violence in partnership with neighbouring authorities in North Staffordshire.

While there is an IDAP programme running in North Staffs, we will work with partners to develop a accredited RESPECT voluntary perpetrator programme to challenge behaviours of perpetrators.

Key Issues

- Raising public awareness of domestic violence.
- Developing a training programme for agencies on a consistent county-wide approach
- Develop an information sharing protocol for agencies and MARACs.
- Look to address the behaviour of perpetrators through RESPECT accredited programmes.
- Working with schools and colleges to challenge beliefs and attitudes of young people.

How will we know if we're making progress?

| | | | |
|-----------|--------------|-------|-------|
| Indicator | 06/07- 07/08 | 08/09 | 09/10 |
|-----------|--------------|-------|-------|

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| Training Programme developed | In place by Sept 07 | Increase number of staff accessing training | Further increase number of staff accessing training |
| Number of perpetrators attending/accessing violence prevention programmes | Baseline established | Increase | Further increase |
| Number of schools receiving education pack on positive relationships. | 2 schools within Newcastle Borough to have received positive relationships education pack | 6 schools to have received positive relationships education pack | All schools and colleges in the Borough to have received education pack |

Protection and Justice

What do we mean?

We want a Borough where individuals will feel confident about reporting domestic violence to the Police, Council and other voluntary agencies in the knowledge that they will be taken seriously, that the criminal justice and support agencies will protect them from further abuse and that they are empowered to protect their children. We will drive to increase and promote the legal protection for victims and their families.

What has Newcastle Domestic Violence Action Group already achieved?

- ✓ Specialist Domestic Violence Court (SDVC) for North Staffordshire based in Newcastle.
- ✓ Funding for an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) for North Staffs for 12 months in partnership with Stoke on Trent City Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.
- ✓ A North Staffs sentencing event for agencies in partnership with Stoke on Trent City Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
- ✓ Staffordshire Police have run successful targeted DVEC campaigns
- ✓ Aspire Housing has made a change to their tenancy agreement for new tenants to include a specific clause for domestic violence
- ✓ Staffordshire Police have driven MARAC to happen in North Staffordshire

What will we focus on over the next 3 years?

We will work with the local Children's SafeGuarding Board in order to ensure that significant issues relating to children and domestic violence are addressed.

We will promote opportunities for perpetrators who wish to address their own behaviour and aim to increase the reporting of domestic violence through installing confidence in victims.

We will aim to secure funding in partnership with neighbouring local authorities and agencies for the IDVA role to continue alongside the SDVC and MARAC. We will work and improve closer working relations with CPS and other agencies to secure just prosecutions.

Key Issues

- Promoting opportunities for perpetrators to address their behaviour
- Developing Safer Child Contact Guidelines for agencies
- Develop a Countywide multi agency data collection system to collate, monitor and share statistical information on domestic violence.
- Supporting victims through the courts and criminal justice system
- Increasing the reporting of domestic violence and reducing the repeat reporting of domestic violence to the Police.
- Sustaining MARACs

How will we know if we're making progress?

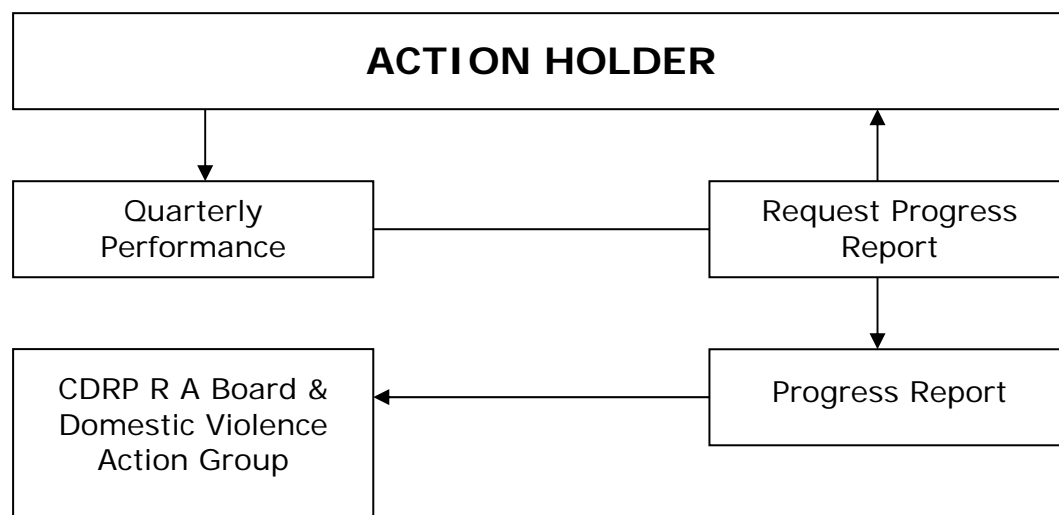
| Indicator | 06-07 - 07-08 | 08-09 | 09-10 |
|--|--|---|---|
| An increase in the first time reporting of domestic violence to the Police | (Using Base-line 2004/5) 794 total offences | Further Increase in line with LAA targets | Further Increase in line with LAA targets |
| The proportion of recorded domestic violence that are repeat incidents in the previous 12 months | (Using Base-line 2004/5) 29% | Further reduce in line with LAA targets | Further reduce in line with LAA targets |

Performance Review

Monitoring and Evaluating this strategy is essential to ensure that coordinated multi agency activity results in the safety of victims, improvements in the availability, those accessing and those who deliver services, and service user satisfaction being developed.

The strategy will also lead to improved local knowledge about domestic violence, increased awareness of where to go for help for help and improved confidence in the criminal justice system, health services and council services.

The strategy will be supported by three 12 month action plans which set out how partners will address the key challenges identified and a phased approach to achieving the outcomes. The CDRP and Newcastle Domestic Violence Action Group will monitor progress, through quarter reports as set out in the diagram below. We also recognise that our performance review must include consultation with the service users and this is a clearly defined action for the first 12 months to establish.



Glossary

BV225 – Domestic Violence Performance Indicator for Local Authorities. There are 11 elements to the Indicator (see Appendix 1)

CDRP – Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership. A CDRP is a combination of Police, local authorities and other organisations who have joined together to develop and implement strategies for tackling crime and disorder on a local level.

HOTSPOTS – Areas identified as having high crime levels reported to the Police.

IDVA – Independent Domestic Violence Advocate, responsible to support victims through the Criminal Justice System and support High Risk MARAC victims

LAA – Local Area Agreement. LAA's are agreements struck between government, the local authority and its partners in an area (working through the local strategic partnerships) to improve public services.

MARAC – Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference for victims of domestic violence

NEWCASTLE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACTION GROUP – A multi-agency group who work towards achieving the Newcastle CDRP targets for domestic violence

SDVC – Specialist Domestic Violence Court. There are 3 in Staffordshire. North Staffordshire's Court is based at Newcastle Magistrates Court

Appendix 1

Actions Against Domestic Violence – BVPI 225

The percentage of the following questions to which a local authority can answer 'yes'. *[To answer 'yes' the local authority must have fully achieved the goal described; it is not enough that the authority is working towards the goal.]*

1. Has the local authority produced a directory of local services that can help victims of domestic violence?
2. Is there within the local authority area a minimum of 1 refuge place per ten thousand population?
3. Does the local authority employ directly or fund a voluntary sector based domestic violence coordinator? *(For District Councils of fewer than 35,000 households, the responsibility for coordinating domestic violence can be designated within the job description of an existing senior officer. For District Councils that contribute to a county-wide coordinator, see definition)*
4. Has the local authority produced and adopted a multi-agency strategy to tackle domestic violence developed in partnership with other agencies?
5. Does the local authority support and facilitate a local multi-agency domestic violence forum that meets at least 4 times a year?
6. Has the local authority developed an information-sharing protocol and had it agreed between key statutory partners?
7. Has the local authority developed, launched and promoted a 'sanctuary' type scheme to enable victims and their children to remain in their own home, where they choose to do so and where safety can be guaranteed? *(For smaller district authorities, of fewer than 35,000 households this can be arranged in partnership with neighbouring authorities.)*
8. Has there been a reduction in the percentage of cases accepted as homeless due to domestic violence that had previously been re-housed in the last two years by that local authority as a result of domestic violence?
9. Does the council's tenancy agreement have a specific clause stating that perpetration of domestic violence by a tenant can be considered grounds for eviction? *(For local authorities that have transferred their housing stock, the clause should be contained in the LSVT organisations' tenancy agreement.)*
10. Has the local authority funded and developed a domestic violence education pack in consultation with the wider domestic violence forum?
11. Has the authority carried out a programme of multi-agency training in the last twelve months covering front line and managerial staff in at least two of the following groups: housing staff, social services staff providing services in the local authority area; education staff; health staff; and front line police officers?