

Manchester Domestic Abuse Strategy Newsletter

Issue 4
July 2008

Welcome to the third issue of the Manchester Domestic Abuse Strategy newsletter, providing regular updates and information on the work being done across the city to wipe out domestic abuse.

Fighting domestic violence – A police officer's view

Detective Sergeant Vicky Shaw spends her days working to protect people from domestic violence, making sure that offenders are charged with the crimes they commit. Here Vicky tells of the ups and downs of her daily work and her experience of dealing with the people who make so many lives a living hell.

Vicky Shaw's career began 20 years ago in Salford as a uniformed police constable.

Five years later she moved on to join the CID in Cheadle Hulme in the Stockport division of Greater Manchester Police.

Vicky was promoted in 1995 as a uniformed sergeant in Manchester, where she worked in CID and the operational policing unit before joining the Public Protection Investigation Unit (PPIU) in February 2006, just as the unit was changing shape.

The unit used to consist of three smaller teams covering the three policing divisions (north Manchester, south Manchester and the metropolitan division) but the teams were brought together to serve the whole city of Manchester.

Vicky now works in the domestic violence section of the PPIU. The other section that makes up this unit deals with child protection.

The domestic violence team consists of two sergeants and 11 constables. This small team has the tough task of dealing with the violence and abuse taking place daily across the city.

When asked about a typical day, Vicky replied: "There's no such thing as a typical day! First thing in the morning, when I get into work, I go through all the domestic violence incidents that have taken place in the previous 24 hours. It's then my job to decide how to deal with each incident.

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The Manchester Crime and Disorder Partnership defines domestic abuse as any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between people who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender. This includes forced marriage where one or both parties do not give consent to marriage.

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"We might have prisoners that need to be interviewed, we may have to make contact with victims and go to visit them – either on our own or with health or social services.

"These actions are then taken to a management meeting that I attend at 9am every morning, where priority incidents are discussed. Once that meeting is finished there is nothing typical about my day.

"I attend meetings, interview prisoners, review crimes to assess how they are progressing, visit victims, and deal with queries from other officers and outside agencies. Every day runs at a pretty fast pace."

Vicky talked about the satisfactory side to her job: "The best feeling has to be when a victim finally decides to come forward, when she realises she doesn't have to put up with being beaten any more.

"The other side of it is when a case has gone to court and the offender has been given a prison sentence for the pain and suffering they have caused.

"Basically, my work is about protecting people and it's good to know when all your hard work has resulted in making sure someone has been offered a better life and a safer future."

Vicky's work isn't always satisfying and there is a lot of frustration in trying to secure convictions: "The most frustrating side to my job is when a victim I have been working with suddenly has a change of heart and decides they can't go through with it. They usually say they don't want to go to court and will make excuses for the abuser or even lie to get the case dropped.

"What victims of domestic violence must understand is that we are in the business of catching and arresting criminals and we will do everything we can to ensure this is done, for the victim's own protection.

"We now have what's called 'reluctant witness prosecution' where we will continue to prosecute without the victim's support and victims may still be needed to attend court in serious cases. We can't give up when someone's life is truly at risk.

"When a victim suddenly decides to say they have lied about what has happened to them it really is disheartening, because if the victim is attacked or abused again months or weeks later they could be classed as an unreliable witness. There are real implications to giving up and putting your life, and sometimes your children's lives, back at risk."

When asked about how other agencies fit in to the work that Vicky does, she talked about the fact that not all PPIUs are run the same way as Manchester's.

"This unit arrests people and takes them to court while the major support for victims comes from the agencies we refer them to. If there are children involved, social services, according to certain criteria, would be contacted as well as the health service. If there were an issue with housing or a civil injunction (court order) then other agencies would be contacted with the victim's consent."

The outside agencies that Vicky works with include: Domestic Violence Outreach Workers, who are soon to change to IDVAs (Independent Domestic Violence Advisers).

They will offer support to victims throughout the legal process. Hosla and Saheli are two of the Asian women's groups we refer victims to and Sojourners offer help and support for Afro-Caribbean women. Domestic Violence Legal Advocacy workers will advise victims on civil matters.

Vicky explained how and why her team would get involved in a case and how they would deal with it: "It usually begins with a 999 call. GMP takes a positive action

approach to dealing with domestic violence, meaning that if there is evidence of a crime on their arrival, we will go out to make an arrest.

"We then work towards collating as much evidence as possible, even if the victim doesn't want to be involved. It is so important for us to bring all the information we have together as quickly as possible surrounding the incident; if the case were serious enough we would file for a 'reluctant victim prosecution'.

"We recently completed a case where an offender was originally charged with attempted murder.

"He had smothered the victim until she vomited, pulled her hair out, hit her with things, threatened her with scissors and beaten her quite severely – but a short while after making the initial complaint she refused to provide a formal written statement or support the Police.

"Due to the work we had done to preserve the scene, we were in a position to continue with the case, which led to a conviction.

"The bravest thing that a victim can do is to pick up the phone but after that it is so important to keep going. Everyone deserves to feel safe in their own home and it is my job to ensure they are no longer put in harm's way."

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"Often, victims just want to see their abusers get help; some get prison sentences but others are given community sentences to address their offending behaviour, which may involve a drug or alcohol programme.

"I understand how hard it must be for a victim to put themselves in the limelight and ask for help but there are ways around having to stand up and face people in court. We have special measures such as screens and video link-ups that can be used so people don't have to be put under the spotlight."

Vicky has two young boys, aged eight and three. Outside work, she is first and foremost a mum, who enjoys spending time with her children.

She has a very strong vision for the future and is in the process of becoming an Inspector. She hopes to end her career as a Chief Inspector with the major incident team, putting rapists, murderers and major criminals behind bars.

When asked if she had any advice to give domestic abuse victims, she said: "If you are suffering from any kind of abuse or violence, we can help – but you have to report it.

"There are lots of people out there who are willing to give you a hand so you won't have to face things alone. There are lots of options and we will be able to ensure you get the right support; all you need to do is tell us about it."

In an emergency, where there is threat to life or property, call 999. To contact Greater Manchester Police or the PPIU call 0161 872 5050.

New service to support abused women at work

When women are living with domestic abuse, it affects the whole of their lives, including their employment.

Domestic abuse may affect a worker's performance, productivity and time-keeping, and create higher levels of absenteeism.

Dependence on alcohol as a coping mechanism can put women at even higher risk of disciplinary action at work. Workers are also at greater risk of on-the-job violence and can lose out on opportunities for promotion and advancement. With this, women can experience higher levels of isolation and job insecurity.

The Domestic Abuse Women's Employment Support Service – or the DAWES project for short – was established by the Greater Manchester Employment Rights Advice Service.

It provides free, confidential legal advocacy and support to women with problems at work because of domestic abuse.

The DAWES project, funded by the Big Lottery Fund, operates across Greater Manchester and is the first of its kind in the country.

Assistance is also offered to employers to develop supportive policies for workers experiencing domestic abuse.

Allison Foreman, a senior caseworker at the project, recognised the need for this provision when she worked for Manchester's Domestic Violence Legal Advocacy Project.

Allison said: "Women want an employment rights advice service that understands how domestic abuse impacts upon their lives and their employment. DAWES provides a dedicated service for them".

DAWES helps women get their employers to take the matter seriously, so that they do not break laws governing welfare and safety, confidentiality, parental and emergency leave provisions, job protection and disability discrimination.

The service can help negotiate changes to create flexibility and help women stay in work. This may include a transfer to another workplace where appropriate, changes to hours, duties and payment methods or breaks from work and time off for appointments. Assistance with grievances and disciplinary matters is also provided.

Whilst it is recognised that some employers are very supportive, there are also employers who do not understand the problem or know how to deal with it.

"Unfortunately, women experience unreasonable treatment, lose jobs unfairly or feel unsupported and under pressure to leave employment. Women do not have to accept this, and we can help," said Allison.

Contact DAWES by telephone on 0161 839 3236 or email contact@dawesproject.org.uk

- ◆ Agencies can either refer a woman to DAWES or work with DAWES to support a woman.
- ◆ Organisations interested in developing a workplace domestic violence policy for staff are invited to contact DAWES for more information.

Women and agencies outside the Greater Manchester area can also contact DAWES for information.

Asian children 'put at risk by PC services'

Asian children's needs are being sidelined as cultural misunderstandings and 'political correctness' hinder the authorities from protecting them from the effects of domestic violence, says an NSPCC report.

The charity is calling for better training and support for professionals working with Asian victims of domestic violence so they can handle cultural sensitivities better.

In the report - *"I can't tell people what's happening at home"* - social care professionals highlighted domestic violence cases where police, health, education and social services did not feel qualified to deal with Asian victims.

This sometimes led them to take the wrong action or no action on the grounds of respecting Asian culture.

NSPCC head of policy and public affairs Diana Sutton said: "Children who are victims or witnesses of domestic violence can suffer both physical and emotional scars that can stay with them throughout their lives.

"Every child, from every community has the right to be protected. Domestic violence affects every class, age and ethnicity but the experiences of those affected and the help they need can differ. The needs and rights of Asian children are being ignored too often."

The most recent estimates by the Department of Health show that 750,000 children are affected by domestic violence each year.

Social care professionals told NSPCC researchers that some Asian perpetrators of domestic violence used their culture and religion to justify their abusive actions and control their victims.

The report also highlights cases where Asian women and children were subjected to further domestic violence by the extended family, particularly in-laws. In these cases, children were turned against their mother or used to control her.

Asian adults and children were brought up to believe that the public image of the family is more important than individual safety and family problems should be kept secret. This makes leaving or getting help for a violent and abusive family situation more difficult, the report says.

The NSPCC's Asian Helpline Manager, Saleha Islam, said: "Asian children and their mothers suffer the double injustice of a community that would rather

save face than deal with domestic violence and a system that lacks cultural understanding so hides behind political correctness."

One child told the NSPCC Asian Helpline: "Teachers don't understand. None of them are Asian. I need to speak to someone from a similar background so they can understand what is happening to me."

Diana Sutton said: "Research cited in the report revealed that Asian women and children worry about racism and stereotyping by the authorities and are more likely to use services which are especially for Asians.

"We want to see the Government train and support professionals working with Asian victims of domestic violence so they can handle cultural sensitivities better.

"The Government must also work with community leaders to find ways of lifting the stigma around domestic violence."

The NSPCC is calling on the Government to recruit more Asians, including interpreters, to work with Asian victims of domestic violence, and fund tailor-made refuges catering for Asian children and their mothers.

The charity is also calling for action on two issues highlighted in the April issue of this newsletter.

It wants new measures to protect women with insecure

immigration status who are relying on their husband to remain in the UK making them vulnerable to abuse.

It is also calling for support for young people at risk or who have been forced into marriage and the introduction of a separate criminal offence for forcing someone into marriage to send a clear message that the practice is wrong and illegal.

The report showed that 28 of the 400 domestic violence refuges in England are Asian refuges. These refuges were found to be overcrowded and under-resourced. They also had inadequate facilities for children who were often traumatized by their experience.

- ◆ The report – "I can't tell people what's happening at home" - domestic abuse within South Asian Communities: the specific needs of women, children and young people – is available to download at www.nspcc.org.uk/inform.

'Asians were brought up to believe the public image of the family is more important than individual safety.'

Call for national strategy on violence against women

The Government should adopt a national strategy on domestic violence, or on violence against women more generally, to include an explicit emphasis on prevention, according to a powerful House of Commons committee.

The Home Affairs Select Committee report on Domestic Violence, Forced Marriage and "Honour"-Based Violence says that a national strategy would provide a framework for turning its detailed recommendations into action.

The committee found that the Government had made significant steps to improve its response to domestic and so-called "honour"-based violence and forced marriage over the last few years.

However, its approach to all forms of domestic violence remains disproportionately focused on criminal justice responses at the expense of effective prevention and early intervention.

The committee said the vast costs of domestic violence to the UK economy – estimated at £25.3 billion in 2005-06 alone – demonstrate the scale of savings to be gained by effective prevention.

The report says that although the exact scale of domestic violence is hard to define, it is the largest cause of illness and injury worldwide in women aged 19-44; greater than war, cancer or road accidents.

Select Committee's recommendations

- ◆ Introducing an explicit statutory requirement for schools to educate children about domestic and "honour"-based violence and forced marriage.
 - ◆ Interviewing visa sponsors where there is suspicion of a forced marriage, including where suspicion is raised through information provided by third parties and allowing visas to be refused without statements from reluctant sponsors.
 - ◆ Introducing a thorough programme of accredited training for front-line professionals – including teachers, health professionals, visa entry clearance officers, police, judges and magistrates – to enable them to identify abuse and refer victims to appropriate support.
 - ◆ Creating enough refuge space and emergency housing for those fleeing domestic or so-called "honour"-based violence or forced marriage in every local authority area.
 - ◆ Filling the gap in resources that prevents use of Probation Service perpetrator programmes as a sentencing option for perpetrators of domestic abuse in some parts of the country.
 - ◆ Introducing "GO" orders, which have proved effective in other European countries in offering an inexpensive short-term method of removing the perpetrator from the home, linked with Sanctuary Schemes, enabling the victim to remain safely in their home.
 - ◆ Ensuring that funding and commissioning arrangements for domestic violence services give fair treatment to domestic or "honour"-based violence services, or women-only services.
 - ◆ Ensuring that all breaches of non-molestation orders result in criminal charges rather than some being dealt with through cautions.
 - ◆ Reviewing the effect of the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act (2007), which comes into force in September, to see if it reduces forced marriage and if not to consider making it a specific criminal offence.
- You can read or download a copy of the report by visiting www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmhaff.htm

Give your views on GP service

The Manchester Out of Hours GP service caters for people who need urgent treatment when their doctor's surgery is closed. You may have contacted this service for yourself or for someone you are supporting who was being abused.

Manchester PCT, which is responsible for planning, designing and purchasing health services for people in Manchester, is currently asking for organisations to bid for providing this service and would welcome your opinion on how it should be provided in the future, particularly if you can suggest improvements.

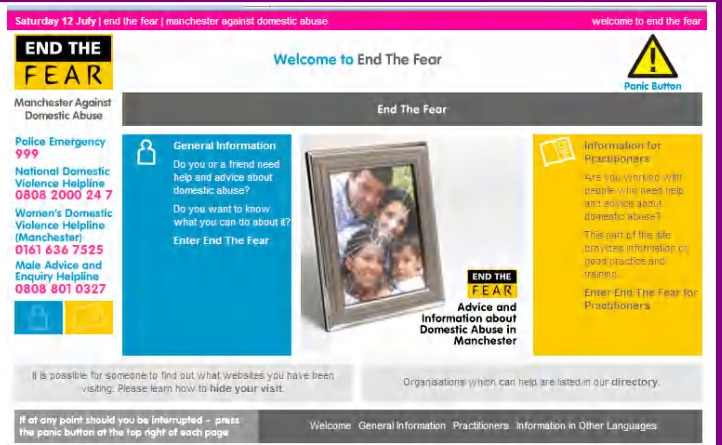
Please help us by completing a short online survey by visiting www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=pKMN8jgOJmlw_2fvGOHgvCIQ_3d_3d

The website run by Manchester Domestic Abuse Management Group – www.endthefear.co.uk – has a fresh new look.

It provides information about domestic abuse – what it is, who is affected and where to get free and confidential help.

For the first time, information for men as well as women is included, along with details about organisations such as Women's Aid, the Male Helpline and the local Domestic Violence Helpline.

The website includes advice on how to keep safe, as well as information on legal advice, housing, help for children, forced marriages and money issues.



Accommodation and support

There are some changes ahead for domestic abuse accommodation and support services in Manchester. New self-contained accommodation is being built in the south of the city to provide eight self-contained flats for women and their dependent children who are homeless or threatened with homelessness because of domestic abuse.

Four of the women's refuges are also to be remodelled from shared accommodation to self-contained flats with some communal space.

Building work is expected to start in October, with three of the refuge sites due for completion by March next year and building work on the fourth site to be completed in 2010.

The City Council's Supporting People Commissioning & Strategy Team will be seeking expressions of interest from service providers in the summer for the provision of accommodation-based support at the new accommodation and at five women's refuges plus outreach support.

A Pre-Tender Event will take place on the afternoon of 29 July 2008 at Manchester Town Hall.

For more information, contact Ruth Helen at Supporting People Commissioning and Strategy Team, Manchester City Council Housing Services, Town Hall, Manchester, M60 2LA. Tel 0161 234 4478 or email r.helen@manchester.gov.uk.

If you or someone you know needs help, contact: Women's Domestic Violence Helpline 0161 636 7525 10am- 4pm (Urdu and Punjabi spoken Mon & Tues 10am-1pm and Wed 1pm -4pm).

- National 24 hour Helpline 0808 2000 247.
- Help for Male Victims 0808 801 0327.
- Advice for perpetrators can be found from Respect 0845 122 8609.
- In an emergency call 999.

MARAC – Training in September

MARAC stands for Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference for Domestic Abuse. Manchester's MARAC meets monthly to discuss high risk victims of domestic abuse.

Information about the risks faced by victims, the actions needed to ensure safety, and the resources available locally is shared and used to create a risk management plan involving all agencies.

Look out for training in September about how to make referrals to MARAC.

Any professional concerned that their client or patient is experiencing domestic abuse can refer them to MARAC. For example, a midwife or GP whose patient tells them that they are experiencing domestic abuse could make a referral or a voluntary agency such as Relate could refer if domestic abuse was disclosed.

Does MARAC work?

The Home Office reports that an initial evaluation of MARACs shows that over 40% of victims suffered no further abuse at the one year follow up stage. The early outcomes for more recently established MARACs show a 50% reduction in repeat incidents.

Who are the agencies involved?

MARAC is chaired by Detective Inspector Jayne Shackleton, head of the PPIU which includes the Domestic Violence Unit, and Claire Bellamy, senior probation officer. Other agencies that are members of Manchester MARAC are Drug and Alcohol team, Women's Aid, Children's Services, Education, Midwifery services and Children's health.

Where can I get more information?

Manchester MARAC, c/o City of Manchester Domestic Violence Unit, Grey Mare Lane Police Station. Tel 0161 856 3703.

For more information on Manchester's Domestic Abuse Strategy please contact Juliet Appleby, Manchester Partnership Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator by email to j.appleby@manchester.gov.uk or tel 0161 234 3177.