



South Staffordshire Domestic Abuse Forum

A Strategic Partnership for Change 2006/9



Introduction

- *This document has been prepared on behalf of the Domestic Abuse Forum for South Staffordshire and describes the collective aims and objectives of agencies linked to the Forum supporting people in the district whose lives have been affected by domestic abuse.*
- *The District Council has made significant progress toward identifying and addressing the need for services to support people in abusive situations. Much of the impetus for change is directed by government with the introduction of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Bill, and other legislative changes including the setting up of Specialist Domestic Violence Courts, and a revision of training for police and prosecutors. Additionally, all local authorities now have a requirement to meet Best Value Performance Indicators for the support of victims of domestic abuse.*
- *Locally, work has progressed in parallel with government aims. An extensive survey conducted by the Primary Care Trust established the level of unmet need in the district. Meanwhile, Staffordshire Police refined their method of recording incidents of domestic abuse and produced statistics which underlined the levels of domestic abuse occurring in the District. The Council's Housing Services Department monitored increasing levels of homelessness due to domestic abuse and the Community Safety Partnership concurred with the government's objective to place domestic abuse firmly on the agenda for change. Staffordshire County Council's Supporting people Team have highlighted the District as a priority area for funding new services.*
- *The Forum sprang from a working partnership between South Staffordshire Council and The Haven Wolverhampton. The Strategy document is a tool from which the Forum's work will develop to meet the needs of people in the community.*

*Kath Farmer – Domestic Abuse Forum Co-ordinator
(The Haven Wolverhampton)*



Foreword

- *'I am delighted to present the Domestic Abuse Strategy designed to contribute to controlling and limiting the instance of domestic violence in South Staffordshire. In my view domestic abuse is a most serious issue, and needs to be given greater attention than has hitherto been the case. This strategy, which will be actively promulgated by the South Staffordshire Community Safety Partnership, is in my view, a significant step towards that end. I commend the document to all residents of the District.*
- *Your views and comments on this document are welcomed, please contact our Community Safety Partnership Team at the Council"*

*Councillor Brian Edwards
Leader of South Staffordshire Council*



Definition

- Domestic abuse is a hidden crime which occurs in close relationships between men and women, in same sex relationships and within family and extended family settings. Overwhelmingly the highest proportion of victims of domestic abuse will be women and their children. Nationally one in four women will suffer domestic abuse at some point in their lives, abused in what should be the safety of their own homes. Incidents of domestic abuse are often witnessed by children, with long-term effects.

The definition of Domestic Abuse adopted by South Staffordshire Domestic Abuse Forum is:

- *“Domestic Abuse is the abuse and misuse of power and the exercise of control between people who are, or have been, in a close relationship. It encompasses all forms of physical, sexual, psychological and financial abuse, ranging from threatening behaviour and minor assaults to serious injury and sometimes death.”*



National Prevalence

- An analysis of 10 separate domestic abuse prevalence studies by the Council of Europe showed consistent findings: 1 in 4 women experience domestic abuse over their lifetimes and between 6-10% of women suffer domestic abuse in a given year. (*Council of Europe, 2002*).
- The 2001/02 British Crime Survey (BCS) found that there were an estimated 635,000 incidents of domestic abuse in England and Wales. 81% of the victims were women and 19% were men. Domestic abuse incidents also made up nearly 22% of all violent incidents reported by participants in the BCS. (*Home Office, July 2002*).
- The link between child physical abuse and domestic abuse is high, with estimates ranging between 30% to 66% depending upon the study. (*Hester et al 2000*).
- Domestic abuse affects people in all communities and of all ages and is a 'crosscutting' issue that no single organisation is able to deal with. It can only be effectively tackled through multi-agency strategies.



Local Situation

- In South Staffordshire during 2004/5 there were 348 incidents of domestic abuse reported to the police. Domestic abuse is acknowledged to be the most under-reported crime and it is safe to assume that the true figure was far higher.
- Domestic abuse accounts for one quarter of the overall police violence figures for South Staffordshire and 40% of these are repeat victims.
- Since 2000 South Staffordshire Housing Services have received 224 applications for re-housing which involved an element of domestic abuse.
- During 2004/5 there were 61 referrals to Stafford Womens' Aid, Pathway received 24 referrals, and The Haven Wolverhampton received 72 referrals from women in South Staffordshire seeking refuge accommodation. Additionally 30 callers contacted The Project Helpline seeking support and advice.
- Within South Staffordshire there are services offering support options for men, women and children experiencing domestic abuse. Community-delivered support includes; telephone helpline, outreach and aftercare services, legal support, and pro-active measures to reduce the risk of the same victims being repeatedly abused ('repeat victimisation'). These services work with all sectors of the community, including support to minority ethnic groups.

A list of sources of support for people experiencing domestic abuse in South Staffordshire appears at the end of this document.



Partnership Approaches

South Staffordshire Domestic Abuse Forum is part of a wider network of partnerships and Forums whose remit is the reduction of domestic abuse.

- South Staffordshire Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.
- South Staffordshire Council Housing Services.
- South Staffordshire Homelessness Strategy.
- Staffordshire County Council Supporting People.
- Staffordshire Domestic Abuse Forums.

Wider networks include:

- Home Office.
- Government Office West Midlands.
- Women's Aid and other independent Womens Refuge providers.
- Regional Homelessness Strategy.
- West Midlands Supported Housing Providers Network.
- The Haven Wolverhampton.



Partnership Working

The South Staffordshire Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) is a strategic partnership aiming to create a safer South Staffordshire. The work of the Domestic Abuse Forum is focused exclusively on dealing with domestic abuse. The aims and objectives of the Domestic Abuse Forum are integral to the aims of the CDRP and represents a genuine 'joined-up' response to domestic abuse.

The South Staffordshire Domestic Abuse Forum aims to:

- Ensure issues are recognised and tackled.
- Engage politicians, senior managers and the general public.
- Implement a District-wide strategy.
- Recommend services to be commissioned.

The Partnership exists to ensure the vision of a safer South Staffordshire is achieved by:

- Working to reduce the incidence, severity and dangers of domestic abuse.
- Tackling repeat victimisation.
- Working with South Staffordshire Housing Services Team to reduce homelessness.
- Addressing negative consequences of domestic abuse for men, women and children.
- Challenging the social acceptance of domestic abuse.

The Domestic Abuse Strategy has been developed with these aims in mind, utilising good practice identified in Home Office documents and in strategies developed elsewhere.



South Staffordshire Domestic Abuse Forum and Associated Agencies

- Bromford Housing Association
- Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS)
- Crown Prosecution Service
- Focus Housing Association
- Her Majesty's Courts Services
- Government Office West Midlands
- Living Springs
- Primary Care Trust – Health Visitors
- Primary Care Trust – Maternity Services
- Primary Care Trust – Mental Health Team
- Rural Net
- South Staffordshire Community Safety Partnership
- South Staffordshire Council Housing Services
- South Staffordshire Housing Association
- South Staffordshire Local Strategic Partnership
- Stafford Women's Aid
- Staffordshire Drug and Alcohol Action Team
- Staffordshire Supporting People Team
- Staffordshire Fire Service
- Staffordshire Education
- Staffordshire Police
- The Haven Wolverhampton
- Touchstone Housing
- Victim Support



Domestic Abuse Forum Strategic Aims and Objectives

As an implementation group of the Community Safety Partnership, the Domestic Abuse Forum will agree priorities for action and contribute to the Community Safety Strategy.

The priorities are drafted into a 3-year Domestic Abuse Forum Strategy, monitored and delivered in the following areas:

- Multi-agency Strategy for domestic abuse in South Staffordshire
- Delivery of Strategy Outcomes
- Awareness Raising Campaigns
- Prevention and early Intervention
- Support for Survivors
- Protection and Justice
- Monitoring and Evaluation

South Staffordshire Domestic Abuse Forum Strategy 2006/9

Themes	Targets	Outcomes	Indicators	Lead Agencies	Progress
Facilitation and support of a Multi-Agency Approach through a Domestic Abuse Forum.	a) Develop and support a multi-agency Forum to provide integrated services identified through a co-ordinated Domestic Abuse Strategy.	Established and formalised group with 4 meetings per year.	BVPI 225	South Staffordshire Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership.	Ongoing.
	c) Employment of a full-time Domestic Abuse Forum Co-ordinator.	Secure funding for post for period of at least 2 years from April 2006.			
Increase community awareness of domestic abuse.	a) Local and county-wide awareness raising campaigns.	Bus advertisement campaign. Awareness raising campaign through Christmas period. Leaflet production for White Ribbon day. Publicity to coincide with International Womens' Week.	BVPI 225	South Staffordshire Domestic Abuse Forum.	Ongoing and periodic.
	b) Current directory of local services produced and available on SSDC website.	Increase first time reporting by 10%. Revision of local services directory.	LPSA2 BVPI 225	South Staffordshire Domestic Abuse Forum.	
Prevention and Early Intervention.	a) Co-ordinated multi-agency response to domestic abuse.	Wide membership of signed-up agencies including Police, Education, Youth Services, Social Services, Probation and Crown Prosecution Service.	BVPI 225	All.	Ongoing.
	b) Shared data between Forum members and other key agencies.	Information Sharing Protocol appropriate to the needs of domestic abuse reporting.	BVPI 225	All.	Start April 2006.
	c) Provision of accredited training to front line staff working in isolated situations.	Targeted groups include Child Minders and GP and dental staff.	BVPI 225	Stafford Womens' Aid / The Haven Wolverhampton.	Ongoing.
	d) Timely and appropriate interventions when drugs or alcohol are contributing factors to domestic abuse.	Prevention of homelessness.	BVPI 213 BVPI 214 BVPI 203 BVPI 183a BVPI 183b	South Staffordshire Council Housing Services.	Ongoing
	e) Timely and appropriate interventions when mental ill-health is a consequence of domestic abuse.				

South Staffordshire Domestic Abuse Forum Strategy 2006/9

Themes	Targets	Outcomes	Indicators	Lead Agencies	Progress
Support for victims and survivors of domestic abuse and their children.	a) Emergency direct access to accommodation in a women's refuge or safe house within the community.	a1) Minimum provision of 1 refuge place per 10,000 population = 10/11 bed spaces required.	BVPI 225	Staffordshire County Council Supporting People Team.	Achieved
	b) Provision of schemes enabling survivors and their children to remain in their own homes, if they choose to do so.	b1) Reduction in homelessness acceptances due to domestic abuse monitored by the Working Group of the Stay Safe Scheme.	BVPI 213 BVPI 214 BVPI 183a BVPI 183b BVPI 203	South Staffordshire Housing Association. South Staffordshire Council Housing Services	
	c) Provision of outreach and floating support to survivors in the community affected by domestic abuse.	c1) Reduction in repeat victimisation of 10%.		South Staffordshire Housing Association / Housing providers	
	d) Challenge the offending behaviour of perpetrators of domestic abuse.	d1) Eviction clause in Tenancy Agreements relating to domestic abuse for housing subject to stock transfer.			
	e) Supportive working arrangements for survivors of domestic abuse.	e1) Workplace domestic abuse policies for Forum agencies.		Employing bodies of Forum member agencies.	
	f) Provision of support and services through health care routes.	f1) Routine enquiry within Maternity Services. f2) Implementation of Vulnerable Adults Procedure (VAP) for adults identified as 'at risk'.		Acute Maternity Services	Ongoing
	g) Development of services to support children and young people.	g1) Locally derived Safe Contact Guidelines for children at risk of domestic abuse after parents have separated.	Every Child Matters	CAFCASS, Staffordshire Domestic Abuse Forum Co-ordinators, other key agencies.	Ongoing
	h) Information and advice provided to children and young people on domestic abuse.	h1) Safety in Mind card produced for distribution to schools. h2) ACTION Pack for schools.		Staffordshire Domestic Abuse Forum Co-ordinators Stafford Womens' Aid.	Achieved Achieved
	i) Monitor the incidence of domestic abuse in South Staffordshire.	i1) Develop a data monitoring system which all agencies can feed into. i2) Organise a 'day to count' in each year.		Staffordshire Police/All All.	Ongoing

South Staffordshire Domestic Abuse Forum Strategy 2006/9

Themes	Targets	Outcomes	Indicators	Lead Agencies	Progress
Protection and Justice.	a) Graded Sanctuary Scheme for victims of domestic abuse.	a1) Improved safety for victims of domestic abuse and reduction in the need to leave home.		South Staffordshire Council, South Staffordshire Housing Association, Crime Prevention, Police.	Achieved
	b) Access to specialist support through the legal process of dealing with domestic abuse.	b1) Reduction of repeat offending. b2) Reduction of retractions b3) Increase in number of offenders charged and brought to justice.	LPSA2 LPSA2	Stafford Womens Aid / Victim Support.	Ongoing
	c) Support for male victims of domestic abuse.	Increase in take-up of support service. Decrease in repeat incidents of domestic abuse.		Victim Support	Ongoing
Delivery of Strategic Outcomes.	a) Agree performance measures and initiate programme of evaluation of adopted Domestic Abuse Strategy.			All.	
	b) Review Council's Policy for Domestic Abuse.			All.	



Domestic Abuse and Health

- Domestic abuse can have a significant and long term effect upon both the physical and mental health of women and children. The long term physical effects of domestic abuse at worst could be death or permanent injury. Mental health effects include depression, anxiety, eating disorders and self harming behaviour. Children can experience both long term physical and psychological problems such as injuries, speech and eating problems and behavioural problems such as bullying, being bullied and becoming aggressive.
- Research indicates that domestic abuse often starts or intensifies during pregnancy and after birth. Since January 2003 community midwives routinely ask the booking contact, at around 34 weeks gestation and in the post natal period, if the patient has ever been subjected to any form of domestic abuse. Detailed documentation of the nature of the abuse is made on a separate confidential form and the health visitor is subsequently informed of the risks to the mother, unborn child and siblings. Referral to social services is made if Child Protection concerns are raised.
- The Primary Care Trust lends its support for training around domestic abuse for health professionals including those situated within accident and emergency units.



Domestic Abuse and Social Services

- Domestic abuse is a significant contributor to the number of children placed on the Child Protection Register or becoming looked after by the local authority. The abuse is often not the direct cause of the child coming to our attention but can be a contributory factor to family breakdown or dysfunction and can seriously affect parenting capacity. In these cases, social workers would refer to specialist domestic abuse agencies and the Family Support Team would work with families to prevent the accommodation of children by Social Services.
- There are issues not just with physical safety or mental trauma when a child witnesses an assault within the family, but also with the emotional distress caused by parents involving their children in disputes and attempting to win their loyalty against the other parent. Sometimes, when couples have separated, or children have been accommodated by the local authority, domestic abuse can continue into contact time when children may be used to emotionally blackmail the partner, or in extreme cases, subjected to physical assault themselves. Social Workers have a responsibility to ensure the safety of the children during organised contact time.
- As a result of domestic abuse in the home, children can suffer from neglect, emotional and physical abuse and other conditions which may lead to their referral to us because of their own activities such as substance misuse, self-harming or perpetrating abuse. On these occasions, the Social Worker will liaise with other agencies to ensure the most effective support for the young person.



Domestic Abuse and Education

- Domestic abuse touches one in four households, in the majority of these homes children at the very least witness some of the abuse, at worst suffer it themselves, often in silence.
- For some children education and school is a place of safety where they can be like their friends. Our duty of care as educational professionals should ensure we are aware of the reality of domestic abuse and act appropriately if and when a child shows signs of concern, distress or physical injury.
- Within our Child Protection Training for teachers, classroom assistants, lunchtime supervisors' etc., staff are encouraged to be aware of physical and behavioural signs that may be indicative of a range of abuse including domestic abuse. The witnessing of domestic abuse is now classed as 'significant harm'. It is crucial that staff are aware of the referral process to social services for appropriate investigation and multi-agency support that could be available to the family.
- For other children school is not something they can face for a number of reasons. For us as education professionals the sensitivity with which we investigate absence from school can be a crucial process in discovering the truth behind a child's home life.



Domestic Abuse and Policing

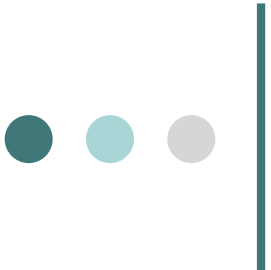
- Staffordshire Police is committed to encouraging victims of domestic abuse to come forward, to supporting the prosecution of offenders and safeguarding the vulnerable; irrespective of gender, sexuality, race, religion or disability.
- In partnership with other agencies, we aim to promote prevention, education and detection of domestic abuse. We strive to treat all victims of domestic abuse with sensitivity, compassion and consideration.
- Whenever possible we will prosecute offenders, therefore, the requirement for positive action in domestic abuse incidents incurs obligations at every stage of the police response. These obligations extend from initial receipt of a report to the response of the first officer at the scene, through the whole process of investigation and the protection and care of victims and any children. Actions taken at all stages of the police response should ensure the effective protection of victims and any children while allowing the criminal justice system to hold the offender to account.
- Staffordshire Police has a number of specialist personnel within the Force who are trained to help and support those experiencing domestic abuse. They are available to discuss any concerns and options available.
- The domestic abuse Officers can be contacted by calling 08453 30 20 10 and asking for them in the Public Protection Unit which covers the area you live in.

In an emergency always call 999



Domestic Abuse and Criminal Justice

- The Crown Prosecution Service has improved its response to dealing with domestic abuse through the development of a collaborative and holistic approach to supporting people through often complex legal processes.
- A Specialist Domestic Abuse Court is now established which sits weekly at Cannock Magistrates Court and all domestic abuse cases in the Chase Police Division are now bailed to the Domestic Abuse Court, and all sentencing cases are dealt with by that Court.
- A Service Level Agreement had been agreed between the Police, Court Service and Crown Prosecution Service in relation to the operation of the court, and action is being taken to write a multi-agency Service Level Agreement to ensure all agencies are supporting the victims who attend this court.
- Training has been given to all Magistrates who sit in the court to ensure they have adequate awareness of the complex domestic abuse issues that arise.
- All Crown Prosecutors have received Domestic Abuse Awareness training, and all domestic abuse cases are scrutinised by a Crown Prosecutor before Charge.
- A senior Crown Prosecutor who is a specialist in the Crown Prosecution Service Domestic Abuse Policy regularly prosecutes at this court.
- The Domestic Abuse Strategy for South Staffordshire supports and underpins the work of the Crown Prosecution Service. Together we will ensure that perpetrators of domestic abuse are dealt with effectively and that victims receive support from trained and informed agencies.



Domestic Abuse - Housing and Homelessness

- The Housing Team (Operations) at South Staffordshire Council is responsible for delivering the Council's statutory front line homelessness; housing advice and housing register services. Based at the council offices in Codsall providing a service to all residents of the district.
- The Council no longer owns and manages its own housing stock, which was transferred to South Staffordshire Housing Association in April 1997. Households where the Council owes a duty under homelessness legislation are nominated to 10 local housing associations where the Council has service level agreements.
- The team has a strategic responsibility for development of the Council's Homelessness Strategy, and implementation of its action plan.
- Domestic abuse accounts for a high proportion of casework relating to homelessness, as shown in the table.
- To offer more choice to victims of domestic abuse, the "**South Staffordshire Stay Safe Scheme**" was launched on 8th March 2006 to assist both male and female victims of abuse to remain in their homes in a safe and secure environment.

Year	Number of Acceptances	Number as a % of total homelessness acceptances
2000/01	33	23.4%
2001/02	33	37.5%
2002/03	60	28.8%
2003/04	33	16.6%
2004/05	34	22.5%
2005/06*	21	21.5%

- Source: PIE Quarterly returns to the ODPM
- * Figures are for the first three quarters only



Domestic Abuse and the Voluntary Sector

- In South Staffordshire the voluntary sector plays a key role in the multi-agency support of victims of domestic abuse.
- Voluntary organisations are often the first point of call for desperate victims of domestic abuse. Because of the wide-ranging nature of domestic abuse and the fact that it is a 'hidden' crime, people of any age and gender who have been subjected to one or more forms of domestic abuse may often feel they can approach a voluntary organisation for help, support and advice more easily than a statutory body. It is therefore essential that voluntary organisations such as Emerge, Stafford Women's Aid and Victim Support continue to provide their services in a complementary way to the statutory services.
- The South Staffordshire Strategy (2006/9) for dealing with domestic abuse is a pivotal document for the planning of co-ordinated services within this district involving both the statutory and voluntary sectors.



Domestic Abuse and Supporting People

- The Staffordshire Supporting People Team 5 year strategy has highlighted that services for women who are or have experienced Domestic Abuse are under supplied in the Staffordshire area and further investment will be required to meet identified need. As a result developments in this area have been categorised as a “Green” priority which will be given funding preference, subject to grant availability, between 2005-2008.
- South Staffordshire is one of the districts identified as a “hotspot” area where urgent investment is required, as at present Supporting People fund no services for this client group in the area. This “hotspot” status has been backed up with a commitment to develop a new Floating Support service for victims of domestic abuse, to enable them to remain in their own homes or help them resettle in the community having left an abusive environment.
- The new floating support service is to be commissioned via an open tender exercise by the Staffordshire supporting people team in 2006, in line with the total funding ring-fenced for the development.



Domestic Abuse and Community Safety Strategy

- The Community Safety Partnership is committed to tackling domestic abuse in the district. As one of the priorities in the Community Safety Strategy (2005/08), we aim to reduce the number of domestic abuse incidents, the number of repeat incidents, increase the reported incidents, and reduce the number of collapsed court cases, over the next three years.
- The Crime Audit (2004) found that domestic abuse accounts for 25% of police abuse figures, with about 40% becoming repeat victims. Hospitals serving our district recorded violence as the second highest category of 'incidents in the home' and include mainly female victims.

Action taken by the partnership:

- The partnership employs a Co-ordinator to oversee the Domestic Abuse Forum. The Forum will establish a victims and survivors focus group to look at the services needed.
- A helpline will be accessible for residents in South Staffordshire, to be a point of contact for advice and signposting to appropriate services.
- Raising the profile of domestic abuse, including how to recognise domestic abuse and report incidents in confidence through the police or other agencies.
- Local Performance Service Agreements (LPSA) are stretch targets agreed between Staffordshire County Council (representing the district councils) and the Government. The targets bring with them additional money which is funding an outreach project based in the district.
- The targets included in the LPSA are to increase reporting of domestic abuse and to reduce the proportion of repeat incidents reported to the police.



Domestic Abuse and Support Agencies

- Staffordshire Police domestic violence officers, 08453 30 20 10
- Pathway Project 24 hour helpline domestic violence helpline, 01543 676800
- Stafford Women's Aid (emergency accommodation, advice and support) 01785 608151
- The Haven (emergency accommodation, advice and support) 24 hours 01902 713001 www.havenrefuge.org.uk
- Victim Support for advice and support for all victims of crime and male victims of domestic abuse 01785 715666
- Karma Nirvana (Asian women's helpline) 01332 604 098 or 24 hour emergency number 0795 285 6859
- National 24-hour domestic violence freephone helpline 0808 2000 247. This helpline can also be e-mailed at helpline@womensaid.org.uk or contacted by post at PO Box 391, Bristol, BS99 7WS
- MenKind for men who have experienced domestic violence 0870 794 4124 or www.mankind.org.uk
- Southall Black Sisters can be contacted on 0208 571 9595 or www.southallblacksisters.org.uk
- Broken Rainbow helpline on 020 8539 9507 - a UK-wide confidential service for lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people experiencing domestic violence. Monday to Friday 9am-1pm and 2pm-5pm. www.broken-rainbow.org.uk or e-mail mail@broken-rainbow.org.uk
- The police. In an emergency where you are concerned for your own or someone else's safety always dial 999