



Bristol domestic violence/abuse strategy

2008 – 2011

Bristol's vision is that domestic violence and abuse will be prevented and where this is not possible, people at risk from its effects will be identified and empowered to live without fear. Those most vulnerable will be protected through effective services which are accessible to all.

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Foreword

Safer Bristol Partnership is pleased to introduce the new Domestic Abuse Strategy for Bristol. Domestic Abuse impacts on every one of us, in our lives, our work places and our neighbourhoods regardless of background, and we all have a responsibility to respond to it in a creative and co-ordinated way. It continues to be a major cause of family distress and social exclusion and it accounts for a quarter of all reported violent crime. It is well understood that at least two thirds of incidents still go unreported and many survivors do not access the support they need.

For several years Bristol Domestic Abuse Forum together with Safer Bristol has taken the lead on this issue and a great deal had been achieved during that time including an increase in safe house provision, prevention work in schools, the development of a multi agency domestic abuse training programme and research into perpetrator programmes. Building on these achievements in March this year Safer Bristol established a Domestic Abuse Strategic Group to work in partnership to take this issue forward in a corporate and strategic way.

This strategy is a result of that collaboration and has a major commitment to tackle both the cause and effect of domestic abuse in the city. Our vision is to identify ways to prevent domestic violence and abuse and where this is not possible to protect its victims. Where people are at risk from the effects of domestic violence and abuse they should be identified and empowered to live without fear. Those most vulnerable will be protected through effective services which are accessible to all.

Domestic abuse is unacceptable and we will ensure that the issue remains high on the city's agenda and is central to any discussion on building better safer communities. By working collaboratively we intend to generate the resources and create the services needed to make a real difference to people experiencing domestic abuse in Bristol. At the same time we will continue to raise public awareness of the consequences of domestic abuse in terms of family distress, social isolation and public cost.

Carol Metters
Chair, Bristol Domestic Abuse
Forum

Peter Hammond
Chair, Safer Bristol

Executive summary

1 Background information

- 1.1 Domestic abuse is the misuse of physical, emotional, psychological, sexual or financial control by one person over another who is or has been in a relationship. This includes family members.
- 1.2 The impact on survivors is wide ranging, and can ultimately culminate in domestic homicide.
- 1.3 There is a high prevalence of child abuse in families where there is domestic abuse. The impact of such abuse can have long lasting effects. 40% of children on Bristol's Child Protection Register are living in households where there is domestic violence.
- 1.4 Most police reports relate to male perpetrators, although there are female perpetrators of domestic abuse. Less than one in twenty incidents reported to the police result in a conviction.
- 1.5 Victims/survivors stay in or return to perpetrators because of issues of power, fear, practical difficulties, children, emotional dependency and for financial reasons.
- 1.6 Over 7,000 domestic incidents were reported to the police in 2006-7, and almost half of these were violent crimes. Taking the British Crime Survey's calculation of under-reporting into consideration, the true frequency of domestic abuse in Bristol is estimated to be over 26,000 per annum. This equates to 70 incidents per day, or nearly 3 every hour.
- 1.7 Domestic violence and abuse has the highest rate of repeat victimisation out of all crimes. Tackling prolific domestic violence perpetrators can have a large impact on crime reduction targets.
- 1.8 The cost of domestic violence and abuse in Bristol is estimated to be nearly £49 million per annum. This includes the cost of state responses and the loss of economic output.

2 Developing the strategy

- 2.1 Bristol's vision is that domestic violence and abuse will be prevented and where this is not possible, people at risk from its effects will be identified and empowered to live without fear. Those most vulnerable will be protected through effective services which are accessible to all.
- 2.2 A dedicated delivery group will be responsible for the management and delivery of the strategies action plans. There has been extensive and wide consultation on the draft strategy and the final strategy is now being disseminated.

3 Aims, principles and objectives

- 3.1 The **aim** of this strategy is to work together with agencies and listen

to survivors/victims to:

- ▶ Raise awareness of domestic violence/abuse and the harm it causes;
- ▶ Take action to challenge social acceptance and change the culture of tolerance of domestic violence/abuse;
- ▶ Develop and evaluate a range of flexible and effective services to improve the safety of women, children and men who experience domestic violence/abuse;
- ▶ Prevent and reduce harm, with reducing repeat victimisation a priority;
- ▶ Bring more offenders to justice

3.2 The **principles** of the strategy are that:

- ▶ The response to domestic violence/abuse will ensure that all survivors/victims and perpetrators have access to services without discrimination due to disability, sexual orientation, race, culture or creed, age or income group. Women-only services will be supported and men's access to other services will be ensured.
- ▶ Services to survivors/victims and perpetrators will be designed and proportionate to the level of risk they face or pose.
- ▶ We are committed to providing a quality service and will draw on national good practice and standards.

3.3 The **performance objectives** of the strategy are that:

- ▶ All people in Bristol who are affected by domestic violence/abuse will have access to a range of services to improve the safety of adult and child survivors. Services will be comprehensive, cohesive and co-ordinated through multi-agency partnerships to ensure appropriate responses, delivered to agreed quality standards.
- ▶ Resources are allocated and performance is monitored to ensure that Bristol can deliver this strategy and that it is informed by the views of survivors and of provider services.

3.4 The **prevention objectives** of the strategy are that:

- ▶ Adults and children and professionals at all levels in agencies will be informed that domestic violence/abuse is widespread, damaging and not to be excused in any circumstances.
- ▶ All children and young people and their carers are informed about healthy relationships and the impact of domestic violence/abuse.

3.5 The **provision objectives** of the strategy are that:

- ▶ Women, children and men from diverse backgrounds and needs are encouraged to report domestic violence/abuse and seek support.

Agencies will ensure barriers to seeking support are removed.

- ▶ Survivors throughout the city have access to independent and flexible support, according to assessed level of risk and need, that offers a range of safety options and follows an empowerment and survivor-centred approach.
- ▶ Children and young people who are or have lived with and/or experienced domestic violence/abuse are identified and protected from harm and receive ongoing support for their recovery and promotion of their resilience.

3.6 The **protection and justice objectives** of the strategy are that:

- ▶ Perpetrators are informed about voluntary programmes of behaviour change, and are unequivocally held to account by the criminal justice system.
- ▶ Professionals are trained and supported in challenging perpetrators when working with individuals and families in all settings, prioritising always the safety of service users and professionals.
- ▶ Victims' rights and needs are supported throughout the criminal and civil justice processes.

4 Framework for service delivery

4.1 We have adopted a **four-tiered model** to plan for services for survivors, children and perpetrators to achieve our objectives.

4.2 The focus of Tier 1 is 'all families'. Plans include universal services, public information, health, education, children's services, housing services and domestic violence forums.

4.3 The focus of Tier 2 is 'vulnerable persons'. Responses include information about services/options, advocacy services, emergency police responses, needs assessments and specialist support and advice.

4.4 The focus of Tier 3 is 'persons with complex needs'. Responses include MARAC and MAPPA, emergency housing, sexual violence services, police intervention, legal advice, child and adult protection, probation and other services based on needs and specialist advocacy.

4.5 The focus of tier 4 is 'persons with acute/restorative needs'. Responses include MARAC and MAPPA, police intervention, legal protection, child and adult protection, emergency accommodation and specialist advocacy.

Background information

Note: To both reflect the overwhelming majority and for ease of reading, this document refers to victims/survivors of domestic violence as female, and perpetrators as male. However, this is not meant to imply that domestic violence does not occur in same-sex relationships, or by women to men.

What is domestic violence/abuse?

Safer Bristol Partnership's definition of domestic abuse is:

- The misuse of physical, emotional, psychological, sexual or financial control by one person over another who is or has been in a relationship. This includes family members.
- Domestic abuse can include being threatened with abuse.
- Domestic abuse is usually by men against women but not exclusively.
- Domestic abuse happens in all groups and sections of society. Race, sexuality, disability, age, religion, culture, class or mental health may have an additional impact on the way domestic abuse is experienced, dealt with and responded to.

The intimate and family nature of domestic violence/abuse means that a very wide circle of people is usually involved, including immediate and extended family members, friends and professionals involved with the individuals. Threats to safety are often extended to family members and friends who are supporting the survivor and children and also to supportive professionals, such as health visitors and school staff. Family and friends supporting the perpetrator also make threats against their safety.

The impact on survivors

Violence and abuse can leave the survivor feeling confused, guilty and/or betrayed. Many survivors feel that emotional violence is harder to bear than physical violence. She may believe she is to blame, or even that she deserves it and feel unable to take important decisions.

Many women are seriously injured or killedⁱ. More than 100 women in England and Wales are killed by a partner or former partner every year, the majority on or after separation from the abuser.

Domestic violence/abuse causes homelessness, poverty and physical and mental ill health, including permanent disabilityⁱⁱ. Women who have been

abused are nine times more likely to misuse drugs (legal and illegal) and 15 times more likely to misuse alcohol, than women who have not been abusedⁱⁱⁱ.

The impact on children and young people

In the majority of families where the mother is being abused the same abuser is also abusing a child. Children are often abused by one parent as a way of controlling the non-abusing parent. Children get hurt by 'being in the way' or by directly intervening to protect the mother from violence. They themselves are emotionally harmed by witnessing harm against their parent. They can suffer physical and mental ill health. Children who live with domestic violence are at increased risk of behavioural problems and emotional trauma, and mental health difficulties in adult life^{iv}.

Perpetrators of domestic violence/abuse

85% of reports to the police are from women about violence from a man. The rest are about man on man violence, women on women, women on men and from children against siblings or parents^v. In this latter case, it is most commonly in a context of a father abusing a mother and the children echoing that abuse against the mother

Domestic violence/abuse cuts across all social boundaries of class, wealth, education, religion, culture, age, disability or sexual identity. Male violence against women is based on society's attitudes and beliefs.

Most prevalent to all abusers is the use of psychological manipulation of the survivor/victim. The most obvious of these is that the aggressor blames her/him for the violence and she in turn, after a long period of psychological violence, begins to feel guilty and blames her/himself.

Many perpetrators repeat their abusive behaviour in subsequent relationships.

Research carried out in November 2006 found that perpetrators were unlikely to have their actions sanctioned through the criminal justice system. Incidents reported to the police dropped sharply out of the criminal justice system at each stage – arrest, charge, prosecution, conviction and sentence – culminating in a conviction rate of just one in 21 incidents (ie. 4% of incidents reported to the police resulted in a criminal conviction). Only 3% of incidents resulted in a medium (community) or high (custodial) tariff sentence^{vi}.

Why people stay in abusive relationships

Survivors/victims stay in or return to abusers because of issues of power, practical difficulties, children and emotions.

The power wielded by an abusive partner and undermining of their self-respect and confidence results in fear of being killed (more women are killed on or after leaving the abusive relationship than whilst they remain), fear of living alone and fear of lack of support from friends, family and from statutory and other agencies. Evidence suggests that domestic violence and abuse is condoned and therefore accepted.

Many survivors will believe that lack of access to money, safe housing and their possessions (including pets) leaves them no alternative but to remain with the abuser.

Many feel strongly that their children's life chances will be adversely affected if their father is removed and they live as a single-parent family, as well as not wishing to inflict loss of home, friends, schooling, extended family and possessions on them.

Domestic violence and abuse is recognised by practitioners and research as a causal factor in the misuse of drugs and alcohol by survivors/victims. Perpetrators may use access to the substance as a control mechanism

Lastly, even the recognition that abuse is happening is commonly not enough to overcome love for an abuser and hope for an end to the abusive behaviour and pity for the reasons that may be given. Coupled with sense of guilt, shame and stigma – whether against the survivor as an individual or against her/his community, these are all powerful ties to keep the survivor hooked in to the abusive situation.

Domestic violence/abuse in Bristol - statistics

- 7,009 domestic incidents were reported to the police in 2006-07, of which 3,288 were recorded as violent crimes. Nationally, domestic violence and abuse accounts for 25% of all violent crime reported to the Police.
- Just over 14 incidents are reported to the police per day in Bristol – more than one every two hours. Taking under-reporting into consideration, the true frequency of DVA in Bristol can be estimated to be 26,195 incidents per annum, 70 per day, or nearly three every hour^{vii}.
- From national research^{viii}, it is estimated that in Bristol there are nearly

40,000 women aged between 16 & 59 who have experienced some form of DVA.

- Domestic violence and abuse is believed to have the highest rate of repeat victimisation of all crimes, with 41% of victims reporting subsequently to the police in the period May – September 2007 (Bristol Domestic Abuse Referral Team).
- The Police notify Bristol Children & Young People’s Services of about 6000 incidents of domestic violence and abuse per year, where children may be affected. Of the children that are on the Child Protection Register in Bristol, 40% of them are living in households where domestic violence and abuse is a significant concern.
- Bristol's own Snapshot research in March 2005 found that: 20% of victims seeking help in Bristol are from black and other minority ethnic communities; 30% of victims seeking help have mental health issues; 22% have alcohol related issues; 16% have drug related issues; and 10% are pregnant; 76% of victims have at least one child; of these 24% have four or more children^{ix}.

Cost of domestic violence/abuse in Bristol

Type of cost	National cost per person	Cost for Bristol
Criminal Justice System	£20	£8,799,244
Health care	£27	£11,878,979
Social services	£4	£1,759,849
Housing	£3	£1,319,887
Civil legal	£6	£2,639,773
<i>All services</i>	£60	£26,397,731
Economic output (loss of working days)	£51	£22,438,071
Total	£111	£48,835,802

This does not include the human and emotional cost of pain, which is estimated to be in the region of £144 million. This also cannot take into consideration the impact on future costs^x.

Developing the strategy

Responsibility and accountability for the new strategy

This strategy has been developed by Safer Bristol Partnership, working closely with Bristol Domestic Abuse Forum, to ensure that domestic violence and abuse response is proportionate to the significant effect that it has on the lives of communities in Bristol.

A dedicated delivery group is responsible for the strategy and is accountable for:

- Delivering and managing annual action plans with performance indicators shown as success criteria that are reviewed periodically by Safer Bristol working in partnership with BDAF and published;
- Obtaining feedback from stakeholders, including the general public and survivors;
- Responding to targets set in Best Value Performance Indicator 225 and the Local Area Agreement (and other targets set from time to time), the Assessment of Police and Community Safety (APACS), national guidelines and publishing periodic reports on progress.

The delivery group is accountable to the Safer Bristol Executive and also will report to Bristol City Council Care and Communities Scrutiny Commission.

Links with other strategies and protocols

Safer Bristol Crime & Drugs Misuse Reduction Strategy
Children & Young People's Services Plan
Bristol Safeguarding Children Board Strategy 2008-11 (under consultation)
Bristol Safeguarding Adults Board Business Plan
Supporting People & Homelessness Strategies
Avon and Somerset Domestic Incidents Protocol 2008 (Avon & Somerset Criminal Justice Board)
Safer Bristol Drugs Treatment Plan 2008-09 (annual)

Consultation process

The draft strategy 2008-2011 has been circulated to the following groups and networks, over a three-month consultation period (15 November 2007 – 15 February 2008):

- All members of Bristol Domestic Abuse Forum and Bristol's local Domestic

Abuse Forums

- Bristol City Council's consultation website (also posted on Safer Bristol website)
- Bristol City Council Scrutiny Commission Social Care
- Bristol City Council Equalities Action Group
- Bristol City Council Equalities Forums – women, race, lesbian gay and bisexual, disability, older people and young people
- Bristol City Council Corporate Communications Team
- Bristol Safeguarding Children's Board
- Bristol Safeguarding Adults Board
- Voscur
- Bristol Care Forum
- Bristol Supported Housing Forum
- Bristol Black Development Association
- Other groups, networks and individuals that requested the strategy.

Members of Safer Bristol Domestic Violence & Abuse Strategy Group and Safer Bristol's Domestic Abuse Strategy Co-ordinator offered to present the draft strategy wherever possible, by email, phone or in person. Comments were mainly submitted by email, with comments made at consultative meetings noted.

The 2008 – 11 strategy against domestic violence/abuse

Strategic priorities

The **aim** of this strategy is to work together with agencies and listen to survivors/victims to:

- 1) Raise awareness of domestic violence/abuse and the harm it causes;
- 2) Take action to challenge social acceptance and change the culture of tolerance of domestic violence/abuse;
- 3) Develop and evaluate a range of flexible and effective services to improve the safety of women, children and men who experience domestic violence/abuse;
- 4) Prevent and reduce harm, with reducing repeat victimisation a priority;
- 5) Bring more offenders to justice

The **principles** of the strategy are that:

- the response to domestic violence/abuse will ensure that all survivors/victims and perpetrators have access to services without discrimination due to disability, sexual orientation, race, culture or creed, age or income group. Women-only services will be supported and men's access to other services will be ensured.
- services to survivors/victims and perpetrators will be designed and proportionate to the level of risk they face or pose.
- we are committed to providing a quality service and will draw on national good practice and standards.

The strategy's aims will be achieved through the following objectives and implemented through the Action Plan, published separately:

Performance

- Objective 1** All people in Bristol who are affected by domestic violence/abuse will have access to a range of services to improve the safety of adult and child survivors. Services will be comprehensive, cohesive and co-ordinated through multi-agency partnerships to ensure appropriate responses , delivered to agreed quality standards.
- Objective 2** Resources are allocated and performance is monitored to ensure that Bristol can deliver this strategy and that it is informed by the views of survivors and of provider services.

Prevention

- Objective 3** Adults and children and professionals at all levels in agencies will be informed that domestic violence/abuse is widespread, damaging and not to be excused in any circumstances.
- Objective 4** All children and young people and their carers are informed about healthy relationships and the impact of domestic violence/abuse.

Provision

- Objective 5** Women, children and men from diverse backgrounds and needs are encouraged to report domestic violence/abuse and seek support. Agencies will ensure barriers to seeking support are removed.
- Objective 6** Survivors throughout the city have access to independent and flexible support, according to assessed level of risk and need, that offers a range of safety options and follows an empowerment and survivor-centred approach.
- Objective 7** Children and young people who are or have lived with domestic violence/abuse and/or experienced domestic violence/abuse are identified and protected from harm and receive ongoing support for their recovery and promotion of their resilience.

Protection and Justice

- Objective 8** Perpetrators are informed about voluntary programmes of behaviour change. Where an offence is reported, all criminal justice agencies will apply best practice to ensure that perpetrators are held to account.
- Objective 9** Professionals are trained and supported in challenging perpetrators when working with individuals and families in all settings, prioritising always the safety of service users and professionals.
- Objective 10** Victims' rights and needs are supported throughout the criminal and civil justice processes.

National Framework

We have adopted a tiered model to plan for services for survivors, children

and perpetrators to achieve our objectives:

Tier 1

Universal services - all adults, children and young people are informed about healthy relationships and the extent and impact of domestic violence/abuse and zero tolerance policies and support. Interventions of information and support by all agencies.

Tier 2

Adults, children and young people who are vulnerable as a result of domestic violence/abuse are identified and offered support and safety planning, to minimise the impact on them. Specific and low-level interventions by non-specialist agencies.

Adults and young people who are committing low levels of domestic violence/abuse are informed of agency policies of zero tolerance, the impact of their behaviour and warned of the consequences, including prosecution wherever possible, and encouraged to seek help to change their behaviour.

Tier 3

Adults, children and young people who are severely affected (for example, forced to leave their homes and/or suffering severe long-term impact on mental/physical health) by domestic violence/abuse are offered a co-ordinated response that prioritises their safety.

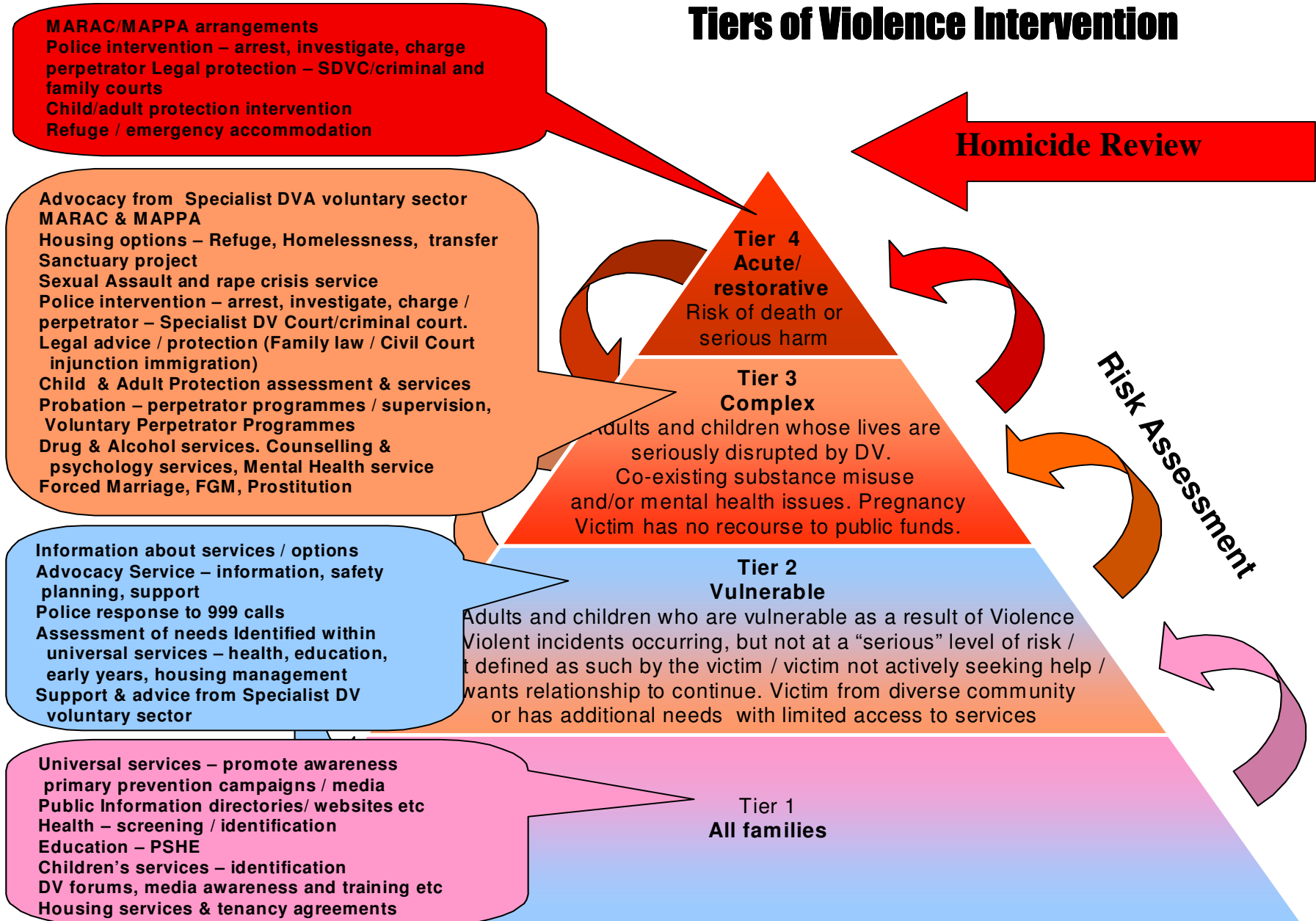
Perpetrators of domestic violence/abuse are subjected to prosecution wherever possible, with rigorous sentencing and including mandatory behaviour change programmes where suitable.

Tier 4

People who are at risk of significant harm (for example, death or severe mental/physical injury) as a result of domestic violence/abuse – as tier 3. Children and young people will be protected primarily by protecting the non-abusing parent and if necessary through child protection procedures.

Adults and young people who are perpetrators of domestic violence/abuse – as tier 3.

Tiers of Violence Intervention



Appendix A

Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

The EIA looks at areas of discrimination and inequality and gather what information is currently known about each in relation to domestic violence and abuse. The annual action plans will describe how the impact of inequalities identified and policy changes needed will be incorporated into campaigning and service delivery.

In all areas of inequality, discrimination that is practised in society can both be a barrier to seeking help and can be used by an abuser to compound the abuse inflicted on the survivor/victim. Victims of minority group abusers may be loathe to seek redress in law against the abuser, because they fear the abuser will not be punished fairly.

Women and men

Baseline data and research shows:

In the 2004 Snapshot study^{xi} 89% of individuals experiencing domestic violence and abuse were female and 11% were male. 85% of perpetrators were male and 15% were female. In 81% of cases, the victim was female and the perpetrator was male.

The differential impact is:

Of the four specialist support services in Bristol (Next Link, Victim Support, Knowle West Domestic Abuse Project and WISH, Hartcliffe), Next Link is a women-only service, in keeping with the gender equality duty, exemptions. All statutory services and legislation gives equal rights to male and female service users. Some believe that male victims feel they are not entitled to use domestic violence and abuse services. This has not been tested locally. The assumption that DVA is only done by men against women may mean that some professionals will not believe male victims who seek help.

Black and minority ethnic groups, refugees and new immigrants

Baseline data and research shows:

In the 2004 Snapshot study^{xii} there were more victims from Black and other minority ethnic groups that would be expected from the make-up of Bristol's population.

The differential impact is:

National research^{xiii} indicates that minority ethnicity does not impact on the incidence of domestic violence and abuse, that is, that DVA is not more common in minority ethnic groups than in the majority community. The Snapshot findings therefore suggest that organisations in Bristol are effective in reaching out to Black and other minority ethnic communities. However, some agencies believe that members of newly arrived minority groups such as asylum seekers and economic immigrants may be unaware of their rights to protection and support. Immigrants whose right to remain in the UK depends on their abusive spouse's nationality rights may feel trapped to remain in the abusive situation. They have limited or no right to claim basic survival benefits (such as housing benefit and income support) and therefore be unable to survive without the abusive partner^{xiv}.

People with physical/sensory impairments and learning difficulties

Baseline data and research shows:

In the 2004 Snapshot study^{xv} showed that approximately 10% of survivors coming forward had a disability. The study also showed 29% of survivors had mental health problems and 15-22% of survivors with drugs and/or alcohol issues.

The differential impact is:

National research^{xvi} indicates that disability is an indicator of risk of more serious levels of physical violence. Mental ill health and the misuse of drugs/alcohol are known to commonly form barriers to individuals being given appropriate support against domestic violence and abuse^{xvii}, where, for instance, the drugs/alcohol misuse is seen as the primary problem to be dealt with, before the domestic violence and abuse can be addressed. Where a disabled person's carer is abusive, the survivor/victim may be unable to survive without what care is given, however, abusive. A victim of a disabled abuser may feel unable to leave that individual without care. Learning difficulties and/or speech impairments may mean that the survivor/victim needs the abuser to facilitate communication and therefore will not approach an agency without specialist skills of communication for support against DVA.

Lesbian, gay and bisexual people

Baseline data and research shows:

In the 2004 Snapshot study^{xviii} 4% of cases were of female violence against women and 4% were of male violence against men. This study recorded only one case of same-sex abuse within an intimate relationship (involving men).

The differential impact is:

There is currently no large-scale national research into the incidence of same-sex abuse. A 2006 study showed DVA in same sex relationships is experienced in similar ways to abusive heterosexual relationships^{xix}. The assumption that DVA is only done by men against women may mean that some professionals will not believe victims in abusive same sex relationships who seek help. Professionals may also presume that a same sex individual who accompanies a survivor/victim to a meeting is a beneficial friend, rather than perhaps an abuser.

Older and younger people

Baseline data and research shows:

In the 2004 Snapshot study^{xx} the greatest proportion (35% of individuals experiencing domestic violence and abuse were aged between 25 and 34 years old.

However, research carried out for the London Metropolitan police found that young women were at the greatest risk of physical injury.

The differential impact is:

National research^{xxi} shows that young women 16 – 24 in abusive relationships are at greatest risk of serious physical violence. National research^{xxii} showed that 4% of all older people experience abuse and neglect and that for more than half of them, the abuser is a partner or family member. Victims are predominantly women and abuse increases with age.

Faith groups

Baseline data and research shows:

Reports of research^{xxiii} show that there is no increase in incidence of DVA in different faith groups.

The differential impact is:

Interpretation of beliefs by individual faith group members can be used to justify the subjugation of women and discriminated against groups such as lesbians, gay men and disabled people and the use of DVA to maintain the position of subjugation.

Appendix C

References

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