

South Bristol Domestic Abuse Forum

Minutes of Meeting

8th July 2009

Filwood Community Centre

Present: Rebecca Dunk (Chair) – CYPS, Leigh Forster – WISH, Emily Moreton – Safer Bristol, Kevin Keogh – Avon & Somerset Police, Margaret Griffin – Health Visitor WBHC, Lisa Taylor – Bristol City Council Housing and Fiona Anderson - KWDAP

Apologies: Linda Mellows – Family Intervention Project.

1. Minutes from Last Meeting – Matters Arising

Minutes of the last meeting were approved and there were no matters arising.

2. Actions from Last Meeting

New Forum Members

As agreed at the last meeting Rebecca invited Margaret Griffin, Health Visitor and Lisa Taylor from housing to attend future SBDAF meetings. Noted that there has been a depletion in Health Visitor Services and as from September Margaret will be on her own and may not be able to attend all meetings. Lisa is a Part Time Senior Housing Advisor specialising in Domestic Abuse and will be attending future meetings as the Housing Representative.

Information Packs

With reference to previous minutes when it was agreed that Lesley Welch and Karen Coward would liaise with Health Visitors to establish what information is currently available and how these packs can be standardised across agencies. Margaret confirmed that she routinely provides information to all the families she visits, discussing domestic violence, making them aware of the domestic abuse projects, freedom programme and other services available to them should this be required but they do not have a specific standardised pack. Lisa advised that new tenants are issued with a Sign Up Information Pack which also includes information about Domestic Violence. This is also followed up by a home visit within six weeks when the topic of domestic violence is also discussed.

Action: Emily will speak to Lesley to receive an update and all members on the Forum will bring what information they currently use so that a standardised information pack can be produced.

Funding

Noted that despite Rebecca's efforts to raise this issue with Carol Metters there did not appear to be any movement on this issue and to

date no indicative response has been received and perhaps the way to raise this issue needs to be reviewed and discussed at future meetings.

3. Role of the Forum

As the relatively new chair of the SBDAF Forum, Rebecca was looking for some feedback from members as to the focus and remit for the group.

Leigh advised that the Forum had reformed as it was only DV workers who were attending the BDAF meetings and it was felt that the SBDAF ensured that links with other agencies were made possible i.e social work, housing, health visitors, police etc. The aim for the SBDAF is for the DV Workers and other agencies to feed into BDAF any information arising from case studies, raising awareness and funding issues and vice versa. Recently however, this has been a one way street with little or no feedback coming back to the SBDAF from the BDAF meetings. Emily advised that BDAF is currently looking at its structure with the aim of making the Forum more focused on the main issues concerning professional agencies with all other matters going to the Strategy meetings in an attempt to get all the relevant agencies involved in the BDAF meetings.

The general consensus of the group was that part of the role of the Forum should be as a lobbying group for funding which can be best done by highlighting the real cost of domestic abuse and that investing in domestic abuse services will actually save money in the long run.

Leigh also discussed the change in how projects are to be funded in the future. WISH and KWDAP will no longer receive grants from Neighbourhood Renewal and will now need to tender for a contract. What this effectively means is that the Council will be looking at what services are required and projects will bid for the money available in the joint commissioning pot. While this will mean that the best people for the job will get the funding, and it is good news in terms of development in Bristol as the funding is secured for 3 years, there is a problem in that the actual money available in this joint commissioning pot has been reduced. Leigh has written to the leader of the Cabinet and Head of Legal Services to ask if an equalities impact assessment has been carried out. Already Next Link have had to close their doors to any new referrals as they cannot meet the demand on their services. People holding the purse strings have to be made aware of the wider social impacts of domestic violence i.e children not attending school and ending up involved in criminal activity etc. If all these additional costs to society are taken into account then it makes no sense to reduce the domestic violence budget.

Emily suggested that a representative from the forum should attend the BDAF meeting to raise these concerns and letters should be addressed to all local councillors.

Action:- Rebecca will arrange a meeting with Councillor Bev Knott which both herself and Leigh can attend to raise the Forum's concerns on reduced budgets.

4. City Wide Work

Leigh advised that she is on the Steering Group for an NHS Conference due to take place on 27th November 2009. The aim of this conference is to highlight the effects of children witnessing domestic violence and how this can impact on other services such as the Police in later life. She is hoping this conference will raise awareness on the costs to society of domestic abuse and the importance of funding for domestic abuse services. The target audience for this conference are Councillors and Politicians who hold the purse strings and Leigh is hopeful that this may lead to more money being placed into the joint commissioning pot.

5. Institutional Advocacy Issues/Case Studies

Leigh asked if her thanks could be passed on to Dave Nichols currently working at Broadbury Road Police Station for the support he has given to Elaine and her client.

Noted that Debbie Riley from Probation had been of tremendous support and ensured a perpetrator's custodial sentence was extended from for continuing to harass the victim from prison.

Kevin was asked to investigate why it is necessary for WISH and KWDAP to have all referrals for the Bobby Van signed before they can be actioned. Leigh confirmed that it can sometimes be difficult to get these signed due to the presence of perpetrators and such delays were leaving victims at risk.

Action: Kevin will check the position with Sharron and report back to Leigh.

5. Any Other Business:

Concerns were raised re the new Apple Phones which can locate the whereabouts of a person at any time and the new online mobile phone directory which you need to opt out of rather than opt in. It was felt that both the phones and the directory can leave people vulnerable.

Kevin advised that the new Nintendo DS can also be used to send text messages but unlike phones these messages cannot be traced which not only makes their job more difficult but leaves victims more vulnerable to this sort of abuse.

Rebecca raised concerns regarding the recent departure of Karen and Emma from the KWDAP which has resulted in services being stretched to the limit. Rebecca is concerned that when Fiona leaves at the end of this month the situation is going to get worse. As Fiona also co-facilitates the Freedom Programme with Sian from WISH this raises other concerns about the extra work to be taken on by staff from Wish to cover this programme. Rebecca advised that there are trained Freedom Programme Facilitators within the Community Teams of Social Work and could be called in to provide assistance if and when required.

5. **Date of Next Meeting:**

The next meeting was arranged for 1.30pm on Wednesday 7th October 2009 at Filwood Community Centre.