



Metropolitan Police Authority

Domestic Violence Board – 5th April 2006

Croydon Borough Response to Domestic Violence

Summary

This report has been compiled at the invitation of the Metropolitan Police Authority to support the 'setting-up' of a Domestic Violence Board that is designed, amongst other aims, to monitor, scrutinise and support the borough response to domestic violence (DV).

The document will seek to reflect the Partnership approach to responding to domestic violence on Croydon Borough Operational Command Unit (BOCU) and will make reference to the recently established and continually evolving Family Justice Centre (FJC), it will also provide detail of the way that Croydon Police support the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) standard operating procedures (SOP's) for the investigation of Race/Hate crime.

Croydon BOCU and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partners (CDRP) have taken an active lead in developing integrated services for victims of domestic violence and continue to develop a FJC based largely on a successful model based in San Diego, USA. The aim of the FJC is to co-locate police and support services in one location in order to provide a seamless service to victims. Currently the police Community Safety Unit (CSU) and a number of key agencies occupy one floor of an office block centrally located in Croydon town centre. The premises have been specifically chosen as they are near to Croydon Police Station, Croydon Town Hall, the Crown, Magistrates and County Courts. This model is also being supported by the development of an integrated Domestic Violence Court (IDV) that aims to formally link the County (civil), Magistrates and Crown Courts to provide a more comprehensive 'justice' based support mechanism for victims of domestic violence.

A. Recommendations

That the report be received.

B. Supporting information

Overview

1. Croydon BOCU fully embraces the minimum standards for the investigation Race/Hate crime as adopted by the MPS as a whole. DV crimes are all subject to the MPS screening procedure and are 'screened in' for further investigation

by an officer based within the CSU. Each crime is reviewed by a Detective Sergeant who sets the investigative strategy and supervises the investigation throughout its life. Particular note is given to offences where the victim or perpetrator is a serving police officer or member of police staff – these are dealt with in accordance with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) set out in Police Notices (Item 2 – 40/05)

2. The BOCU has champions at a number of levels throughout the borough. The BOCU Commander, Chief Superintendent Gore, provides a strategic lead with CDRP Partners; the Borough Crime Manager (Detective Chief Inspector Stockford) provides a lead at Senior Management Team (SMT) level. DI Matt Robins is the CSU manager and Director of Criminal Services at the FJC.
3. As the CSU manager, DI Robins is responsible for the effective day-to-day management and supervision of the CSU. This encompasses not only all allegations of domestic violence, but also all Hate crimes and allegations of vulnerable adult abuse.
4. The Director of Criminal Services is part of the CSU manager's overall role, now the entire CSU has relocated into the FJC. However, this is specifically focused around domestic violence. The 2 roles are closely interlinked; as the partner agencies are the main contacts a CSU manager would be working closely with anyway, wherever the Community Safety Unit was placed.
5. The Director of Criminal Services at the FJC co-ordinates the particular services on site at the FJC, which are part of the criminal justice service response, (i.e. the Police, Probation, FME. (Forensic Medical Practitioners.) Additional responsibilities of this role include acting as the main contact person to the off site partners, i.e. the Magistrates Court and CPS, in relation to criminal justice services located in the Family Justice Centre.
6. The BOCU identified weaknesses with performance for detections for domestic violence in July 2004. It invited officers from the Racial and Violent Crime Task Force (RVCTF – DCC4) to review processes and make any recommendations to aid improvements in performance. As a result of this process the staffing levels in the CSU were increased by 2 supervisors and 5 constables, leaving it with a current 'strength' of 1 Detective Inspector, 4 Detective Sergeants and 21 Constables (detective, trainee detective, and police constables) together with 1 full time and 1 part time police staff support. (The demographic breakdown of staff is 12 males and 14 females (with 5 of the staff overall being of black and minority ethnic origin). There is currently one vacancy within the team but this is a moving picture, the vacancy is not due to lack of specialist training.

Implementation of book 124d and risk assessment

124d

7. A further part of the improvement plan was to volunteer to 'pilot' the use of book 124d by initial investigating officers, and to support the implementation of those books a one-day training input was devised and delivered to ALL staff across the borough. This training also revisited the SOPs for Race/Hate crime and reminded staff of the necessity of taking positive action at all incidents of domestic violence. This training is now in its second phase and is targeting staff new to the borough; current returns show that 88% of all staff have now received this training.
8. The adoption of the book 124d has allowed investigators to interview suspects without the need for in-depth additional statements from the victim at the time. These have also allowed interview when the victim decides 'not to support' further police action.
9. The recording of complaint by both victim and witness in book 124d, together with admissions where appropriate by suspects has assisted in improvements in performance against non sanctioned detections and compliance with Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR).
10. The form has also acted as an aide-memoire for officers attending and investigating domestic incidents. There was initial reluctance/resistance to the completion of the forms but they have now become part of everyday working.

Risk Assessment

11. The book 124d forms the basis of the risk assessment tool for domestic violence on Croydon BOCU. Initial investigating officers complete the details and record those on CRIS. In high risk cases immediate action is then taken by those officers to remove/minimise/reduce the risk. CSU supervisors (DSs) review the initial assessment, consider any other factors that have subsequently been noted and implement any safety plans.
12. If a domestic violence incident is graded as medium risk, the following steps are always considered by the CSU investigating officer. Any actions taken will be recorded on the crime report along with justification when specific actions are not taken.
 - (a) Take steps to arrest suspect.
 - (b) Refer Victim to FJC partners, Croydon Domestic Violence Advocacy Service (CDVAS) and Victim Support Services) VSS.

- (c) The victim must be contacted and given general practical advice re crime prevention.
13. If a domestic violence incident is graded as high risk, then the following steps are always considered by the investigating officer. Any actions taken will be recorded on the crime report along with justification when specific actions are not taken.
- (a) Take immediate steps to arrest suspect.
 - (b) A Special Schemes information marker on CAD will be placed on the address. (More commonly known as Treat All Calls As Urgent) This means that where police receive further calls to an address, information regarding the DV history and risk to the victim will be immediately available to control room staff and officers attending the incident.
 - (c) Issue personal panic alarms to victim and any other member of the family that maybe in danger. These are currently provided and funded by Croydon Council and are available on a 24-hour basis.
 - (d) Refer Victim to CDVAS and FJC services.
 - (e) Advise victim to move home to a safe environment.
 - (f) In emergency cases, direct referral through to housing services to re-house victim and family.
 - (g) Refer victim to the Sanctuary project.
 - (h) General practical crime prevention advice i.e. change routine, contact 999 etc.
14. CSU officers in company with a DV lay advocate pro-actively visit victims at their homes where civil injunctions have been issued. This enables police to ensure that DV perpetrators are adhering to conditions.
15. Croydon CSU has a dedicated DV high-risk victim liaison officer. This is based on repeat victim data provided to borough CSU's by the RVCTF.
16. Monthly searches of police CRIS and CRIMINT (Criminal intelligence) systems are undertaken to monitor further reports and information that comes to light. Victims are spoken to personally by the CSU officer and DV lay-advocate where appropriate to further monitor the situation and offer ongoing support where necessary.

Policy compliance, implementation and quality assurance

National Crime Recording Standards (NCRS)

17. The BOCU uses its Control Room Manager (Inspector) to run checks to ensure that it meets its obligations for compliance to the National Crime Recording Standards (NCRS). Any discrepancy between incidents recorded on the Computer Aided Despatch System (CAD) as allegations of domestic violence and those resulting in a Crime Recording and Investigating System (CRIS) are examined to ensure that NCRS is being fully complied with. Whilst we are not able to extract specific examples of this process for this report (due to time constraints) likely reasons for variations between the number of domestic violence incidents that the BOCU has responded to via CAD and the number of DV incidents subsequently 'flagged' on CRIS is the volume of incidents that are reported at the 5 station offices across the BOCU. Discrepancies between the number of CAD reports and subsequent CRIS reports flagged as DV can be explained by the quality and level of information initially available to the 'call handler' which is then clarified by the initial investigating officer on attendance at the scene.

CRIS flags, minimum standards of initial investigation (including CRIMINT, MERLIN and Book 124d)

18. Supervising officers (uniformed Inspectors and Sergeants) are responsible for initial supervision of all allegations recorded on CRIS of domestic violence and are expected to take a proactive role, with the Section Sergeant attending incidents where appropriate.

19. The Crime Management Unit (CMU) check all new CRIS reports for appropriate 'flags' (in accordance with current MPS guidelines) before allocating to the appropriate unit for further investigation and action as appropriate.

20. The Crime Manager (Detective Chief Inspector), CSU Manager (Detective Inspector) and CSU Detective Sergeant all screen and review all CRIS reports that have been flagged as 'DV' to ensure that the flagging is correct.

21. The Crime Manager (process to be changed with effect from 3rd April 2006 – to give responsibility to a Detective Sergeant within the CSU) completes a template which highlights the following matters from the CRIS reports: Suspect present, suspect arrested, supervision by 'frontline supervisor', book 124d completed, risk assessment recorded, team and initial investigating officer, CRIMINT completed, MERLIN report completed, any other matters pertaining to positive action (proactive arrest enquiries). This template is then circulated to all borough staff and is reviewed at the Daily Management Meeting. The

inclusion of officer details as well as team details enables poor performance to be identified and appropriate action to be taken.

Support for investigating staff

Uniform response teams

22. In addition to the training already outlined, each team is allocated a number of cameras to facilitate the initial evidence gathering (photographing injuries, damage etc).

CSU staff

23. The Crime Academy run courses specifically designed to meet the needs of staff employed within the CSU. There is a one-week course for supervisors and a 2-week course for constables (aimed at those officers not undertaking detective training).

Other investigating units

24. DV rapes and sexual assaults are investigated by the BOCU Sapphire Unit, who work closely with the CSU and FJC partners where necessary, for example referrals to CDVAS (Croydon Domestic Violence Advocacy Service) or RASACS worker.

25. These investigations are subject to review at specified periods by the Detective Inspector in charge of the Sapphire Team (she has experience of running a CSU) per the Standard Operating Procedures for Rape investigation.

26. Where domestic violence investigations fall within the CSU where sexual abuse is alleged but not substantiated, the services of FJC on site RASACS workers and DV lay-advocates will be offered to the victim. In these cases the team Detective Sergeant sets investigation strategies and regular supervision and reviews are undertaken.

27. Child abuse cases are investigated centrally by officers from the Child Abuse Investigation Teams (CAIT.) The Croydon CAIT team DI has already visited the FJC and is aware of agencies available to them where appropriate, e.g. child social services within the FJC.

28. Detective Chief Superintendent Spindler (MPS lead on child abuse investigations) has visited FJC and has the long-term goal of moving the Croydon CAIT team within the Croydon FJC.

Performance Management

29. A number of systems are used to monitor/manage performance with regard to domestic violence.
30. The Crime Manager and CSU DI review all DV crimes on a daily basis (as outlined above) and this information is discussed with SMT colleagues at the Daily Management Meeting.
31. The Crime Manager has an 'informal' weekly performance review with the CSU Manager using data produced by the RVCTF centrally on a weekly basis. Monthly SMT performance meetings that address performance across a number of different areas have supported this.
32. There are monthly meetings at TPHQ for all CSU Managers and these monitor and discuss performance as well as facilitating the sharing of good practice.
33. The borough is visited every six months by a dedicated borough CSU link from the RVCTF. Discussion then takes place about emerging issues and problems.

Organisational Learning

34. The BOCU provides support to the MPS homicide review process. Requests to borough CSU's for murder reviews come centrally from the Commander Crime at Territorial Policing Headquarters (TPHQ) Steve Allen. Guidelines for multi-agency DV murder reviews are provided along with review template.
35. Croydon carried out 2 murder reviews during 2004/05 chaired by the Domestic Violence Joint Planning and Commissioning Team Chair, Toni Letts. Agencies who attended these reviews were:
 - Croydon Council Social
 - Croydon Council Housing
 - Croydon Council
 - CDVAS
 - Croydon Primary Care Trust
 - Croydon Police
 - Probation
 - Women's Aid
 - Croydon People's Housing Association
 - Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Service (RASACS)
 - Mayday Hospital
36. In 2004 Croydon piloted the Domestic Violence Chronolator - an IT programme specifically designed to assist in domestic violence murder reviews by enabling relevant partner agencies to effectively share and transfer information.
37. ChronoLator adds table checking and manipulation features to Microsoft Word documents in order to assist the production of chronology tables. The documents are initially set up by a Case Review Administrator, who specifies

what information is to be collected and under what headings. The Case Review Administrator then distributes them to the various organisations from whom data is required. Those organisations can delegate responsibility for data collection by appointing a 'Local Administrator', who distributes copies of the ChronoLator Document for completion by departments within the organisation. When they have been completed, the Local Administrator merges them into a Composite Chronology that is returned to the Case Review Administrator who sent the original request. The Case Review Administrator merges all returns into a final Composite Chronology.

38. This is then given to the report writer who compiles and presents the report to the Murder Review Board. The borough continues to use this process.

Learning from Review

39. One of the murder reviews identified the lack of awareness between agencies and organisations involved with the same individual and/or family. This review also highlighted the mis-information sometimes present. For example the medical staff (psychiatrist and family doctor) supporting the victim were aware that she had left her partner that week however the partner had informed both Probation and the police that he was living with the victim during the time leading up to the day of the murder. The murder review process reinforced the identified need for a co-location of services i.e. the FJC.

40. Recommendations from 2 of the Murder reviews carried out included the need for:

- Improved links between police and lay advocacy service - Croydon BOCU established improved links between the lay advocacy services by means of an agreement where a lay advocate would be based in Croydon Police CSU office 5 days a week.
- Sharing of information between key partners, Croydon BOCU were actively involved in the establishment of a FJC, bringing together all partners, (statutory and community/ voluntary), in one location. Croydon Borough Commander agreed to the transfer of the entire CSU to the FJC to enable the co-location of the police with the other key partners in the borough providing a response to domestic violence reports/incidents. Croydon BOCU chaired the initial planning and development meetings for the Centre (over a period of 18 months).
- Additional provision of monitoring services from key partners involved - The FJC monitoring and recording of information is completed on one central form by all on site partners including the police (*appendix 1*). The centralising of information enables improved services to families using the centre and

improved information sharing between partners. This recording is in addition to the standard police recording of information.

- Multi agency case reviews where violence and/or abuse was escalating - Co-locating the services in the FJC enables regular case reviews. Any partner can request a case review for a particular family where they have increased concern. Due to the co-location of services this process can be carried out within a short time frame whereas previously the time period was considerably longer due to locating partners and establishing a date for a meeting.
- Ongoing training for key partners providing services -Croydon BOCU has increased the provision of domestic violence training to officers. In addition Croydon police Community Safety Unit provide an input to other key partner training, conferences and awareness raising events.
- Provision of Sanctuary scheme in Borough - Croydon Local Authority and Croydon BOCU developed the Sanctuary service-providing services to enable victims and/or survivors of domestic violence to remain in their homes.

41. This financial year, (2005-2006) there has been one DV murder and a review is currently underway.

Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP)

42. Domestic Violence is a priority within the Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy and a copy can be found within the appendices (*appendix 2*).

43. The CDRP within Croydon has an overall budget of £398000, some £55000 of which is dedicated to tackling domestic violence. This sum is contributed to the running costs of the FJC and the funding of 1 part time lay advocate.

44. As previously mentioned Croydon Borough has implemented a Family Justice Centre which is designed to draw together domestic violence initiatives, projects and services/responses from all statutory and many voluntary services/charities. Additional preventative work is carried out by the FJC on behalf of the CDRP – this includes publicity, raising awareness through press and media interviews in both local and national television and newspapers.

Partnership working

45. The FJC provides the mechanism for voluntary and statutory organisations to work together at one central location in order to provide the best possible service for ALL victims of domestic violence. The following organisations are involved within the FJC process:

- Croydon Council officers
- Croydon Police CSU

- Croydon Domestic Violence Advocates
- Croydon Women's Aid
- Victim Support
- Relate
- Croydon Disability Forum
- NSPCC
- Croydon Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Trans-gender forum
- Welcare
- RASACS (Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Services)
- Croydon Housing Associations
- London Probation
- Croydon College
- Croydon Solicitors
- CCDA (Croydon Community Drugs Agency)
- SNWC (South Norwood Women's Counselling)
- Citizen's Advice Bureau
- AGE CONCERN
- LEFPA (London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority)
- CTIS (Croydon Translation and Interpreting Services)
- Department of Housing
- Department of Social Services
- Croydon Primary Care Trust
- Faith Groups
- Mayday hospital

46. Co-located resources currently include: Croydon Police; Social Services; Social Services children's team; Probation women's safety officer; local solicitors providing county court work; VSS; emergency housing provision officers; refuge workers; rape counselling services and lay advocacy services. Eventually there will be more than 40 different agencies that will be providing staff to the FJC.

47. These agencies use a central monitoring and referral form for any victim or family member that has contact with the FJC (*see appendix 1*).

48. There is a weekly 'Operations Meeting' within the FJC 'community' to identify gaps/concerns regarding responses to victims/survivors of domestic violence and to monitor/identity client satisfaction. These meetings are co-chaired by the Director of Policy and Development (Jill Maddison) and the Director of Criminal Services (CSU Detective Inspector) and is attended by representatives from the police, housing, lay advocacy services, solicitors, Social Services, VSS, RASACS and Women's Aid.

49. Victims, survivors and family members using the FJC complete an exit form where satisfaction and client needs are fed back to a representative from an independent on site partner i.e. one from whom the client has not received services on that particular visit. Direct feedback from victims/survivors and their families also takes place.

Consultation

50. Croydon Local Authority is co-ordinating, through on site partners of the FJC, education work carried out in schools. This is not work funded through the CDRP.
51. There is currently no specific Health work in relation to domestic violence work funded through the CDRP however Croydon BOCU has agreed the provision of the FME services to victims of domestic violence attending the Family Justice Centre. This is provided 'on site' in the 2 purpose-built medical rooms provided by Croydon Council.
52. Focus groups facilitated by local organisations are co-ordinated by the Local Authority on a 6 monthly basis. In addition where a specific new initiative is proposed or implemented extensive planning meetings with advocacy organisations and survivors are held. Examples of this include a 5-month consultation with survivors held 9 months into the Specialist Criminal Domestic Violence court pilot. Questionnaires were distributed through advocacy organisations and the Police to survivors. 100+ forms were returned providing data regarding victim satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the Police and courts (Magistrates and County)
53. The focus groups and questionnaires highlighted victims/survivors experiences within the criminal and civil justice system. The findings overwhelmingly highlighted the general satisfaction with police responses (particularly the partnership with officers and the lay advocacy services) and Family Court systems but the dissatisfaction with outcomes from the criminal courts. This was noticeable even where a guilty verdict was reached.
54. Croydon BOCU has responded to the findings by ensuring continuation and expansion of the partnership working with the lay advocacy services.

Project Umbra

55. The borough attended the first 2-day residential conference in the planning stages of Project Umbra. Following this the Local Authority domestic violence policy adviser was invited to sit on one of the project Umbra groups - Integrated Courts and Laws. This provides a mechanism to facilitate information flow from Croydon to the Board and from the group to Croydon.
56. A presentation was given to the Project Umbra Board on the work of the FJC in January 2006 by the Director of Policy and Development (Jill Maddison) and the Director of Criminal Services (Matt Robins – CSU.)

C. Equality and Diversity Implications

57. Croydon police have been involved in supporting Partners in the planning stages of the FJC. This support was from the very outset at Borough Commander level. In order to demonstrate commitment the borough CSU and all staff have been entirely relocated to the FCJ.
58. Croydon police have funded some of the costs involved, and have enabled staff to visit some of the FJC's currently in operation in America.
59. The primary aim of the Family Justice Centre is to reduce/eliminate the barriers faced by victims of domestic violence and Family violence who are seeking help.
60. Through the collaboration of a community of partners working together, the FJC aims to:
- Provide a centre of co-located and coordinated services which are easily accessible to the victims of domestic violence and family violence
 - Offer both criminal and civil legal assistance among its services
 - Make available to victims a spectrum of services and programs which promote long-term support for themselves and their children
61. The FJC project management team are working to ensure that services are accessible to all communities in Croydon borough regardless of age, gender, black or minority ethnic background, sexuality or faith/religious group. The FJC project management team has ensured that extensive consultation took place throughout the planning and setting up of the centre – specifically:
- Women - Croydon DV Lay Advocacy Service have been involved throughout the FJC consultation process. On site partners include female DV advocates, RASAC, women's Aid and refuge. More than 50% of police CSU staff are female should victim's specifically request a female officer.
 - Young people - On site child services; Direct link to police CAIT teams through CSU; Dedicated children's medical examination suite; 'Child friendly' interview rooms within FJC; Officers within the CSU have been given specialist training in interviewing young and vulnerable victims/witnesses. (ABE trained – Achieving Best Evidence interviewing course.)
 - Older people - All allegations of elder and vulnerable adult abuse are dealt with by CSU officers; CSU DI on borough Adult Protection committee; CSU representatives also sit on (i) policy and best practice, and (ii) case review sub-committees; Dedicated CSU central point of contact for partners to offer advice and guidance; Age concern are FJC on-site partners; Officers within the CSU have been given specialist training in interviewing older

victims/witnesses. (ABE trained – Achieving Best Evidence interviewing course.)

- Disabled people - The FJC premises, which includes the CSU suite, is DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) compliant. There is on-site access to the Disability Forum representative and solicitor who provide benefit advice to disabled victims; Officers within the CSU have been given specialist training in interviewing older victims and witnesses with mental and physical disorders and disabilities. (ABE trained – Achieving Best Evidence interviewing course.)
- Black and Minority ethnic communities - Black and ethnic minority advocates and police staff are on site to assist victims as appropriate to their needs; All allegations of race crime are investigated by CSU staff; Police partnership unit provides specialist community contacts appropriate to victim's needs; Direct links from CSU to borough race crime strategy meetings through Croydon Council equal opportunities and diversity team; Interpreters available to victims through FJC
- Lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender people - Croydon Lesbian and Gay forum were involved in the consultation process and provide on site services in the FJC; All allegations of homophobic and transgender crime are will be investigated by CSU staff; CSU representation on local 'Aurora' homophobic crime consultation group with direct link to boroughs LGBT liaison officer; Police partnership unit provides specialist community contacts appropriate to victim's needs.
- Refugees and asylum seekers - On site Croydon Asylum Seeker Project.
- People without permanent homes, e.g. the homeless or travelling people - Croydon housing representatives are on site partners; The Sanctuary project, which is funded by Croydon Council, allows for the homes of DV victims to be given extensive security upgrades which will allow them to remain at their home; Crocus house, part funded by Croydon Council and devised by Croydon YMCA, allows for emergency accommodation for DV victims and families, fleeing domestic violence, and where sanctuary project work is due to take place.
- Faith groups - Currently local faith groups are in consultation phase but will be on site FJC partners in may 2006.

D. Summary

62. Croydon Police and CDRP Partners are committed to providing a high quality service to all victims of domestic violence and other Hate crimes through the provision of the co-ordinated services of the FJC. The FJC is the first to be launched in Europe and aims to combine the best features of similar projects within the USA whilst dove-tailing with the pilot for the Integrated Domestic

Violence Court process to provide a comprehensive and easy to access service.

63. With this in mind very considerable thought is being given to appropriate measures of effectiveness for the cases referred to the FJC. With a Partnership approach the likelihood is that 'successful outcome' will become the best measure. This can be judged by a combination of civil injunctions, criminal prosecutions (sanctioned detections), reductions in repeat victimisation, and levels of referrals through the FJC. These measures currently provide challenges because each agency has its own internal measures of effectiveness and these often conflict.

E. Contact details

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Date: 21 March 2006

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Appendix 1: Croydon Family Justice Centre - Client Information Form

Appendix 2: Croydon Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy

Appendix 3: Croydon Data Summary