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Date:



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Dear Valerie Brasse and Kirsten Hearn,

Thank you for your letter dated 22 February 2011. Further to our presentation to the MPA Domestic and Sexual Violence Board on 15th February 2011 I enclose answers to the six questions you raise.

Q1: Update on the 41 point action plan from previous review

The Wills report made 11 recommendations which, together with the Local Authority's own internal scrutiny over two years ago, resulted in a 40 plus point action plan. That action plan has been superseded by events, not least unfortunate but multiple changes in the DV Co-ordinator, Local Authority leads and a change in Borough Commander. The full action plan with updates will follow as an appendix if required but the reports have been carefully considered and formed the basis of the new three year DV Strategy developed last year. The 5 key recommendations which have been prioritized are:

Recommendation 1: That a senior leader be appointed to oversee the development of the partnership and drive the agenda throughout that partnership.

The Cabinet member for Community Safety leads on the domestic violence agenda and is currently spear-heading a borough wide domestic violence media campaign to raise awareness.

In terms of the partnership a clear governance framework has been put in place to support the domestic violence agenda. The Safer Communities Partnership Board reports to the One Barnet Strategic Partnership formally known as the LSP (the SCPB is also supported by the local children's safeguarding board and the safeguarding vulnerable adults board).

The Domestic Violence Strategic Board - co-chaired by the Director of Children's Service and Police borough Commander, reports to the SCPB and sets direction for the domestic violence agenda. The work is guided by the Barnet Domestic Violence Strategy 2010/2011-2012/2014.

This strategy, set by the DVSB, is implemented through the Domestic Violence Operational Group which is responsible for the DV action plan and oversees various workstreams and project groups e.g. the commissioning project team. There are a number of key supporting workstreams that report to the Domestic Violence Operational Group such as the Special Domestic Violence Court (SDVC) management group, the MARAC Operational Group, and the Domestic Violence Forum. An additional group that has oversight of the domestic violence agenda is the Borough Criminal Justice Group (BCJG) which also has oversight of SDVC performance.

Regarding the SDVC, a task and finish group has been set up to ensure that case trial issues are discussed and interventions put in place to improve support to victims in court. The Domestic Violence Coordinator now facilitates the SDVC meetings and gives feedback to the group on strategic issues, and similarly feeds back any SDVC issues to the DV Operational Group as necessary.

There are now clear roles identified through the Domestic Violence Operational Group, although the Domestic Violence Coordinator role is pivotal to the progression of projects and workstreams. A selection process is underway for a new Dv Co-ordinator.

The Domestic Violence Forum is currently under review, and its terms of reference are being updated. The re- elections for the Chair and Vice Chair will take place later this year. The DVF is being developed by ensuring that there is a good cross section of organisations in Barnet as members. The focus has been to ensure that black and ethnic minority organisations are well represented, and there have been several presentations at DVF meetings to raise the profile of some of the organisations that work with victims in Barnet e.g., the Eastern European Community Outreach Project, and Barnet Asian Women's Association. The DVF does not have an individual work programme, as it was agreed by the DVSB that members would guide meetings and activities at the quarterly meetings.

Recommendation 2: The current DV Partnership must be restructured to provide strategic leadership, delivery of actions and effective use of existing expertise

The Domestic Violence agenda now sits within Children's Services (it previously was based in Community Protection). The DV Coordinator and MARAC Coordinator are based in the newly formed Early Intervention and Prevention Division. A new Project called the Safer Families Project has been formed in response to the Council's strategic priority to improve early intervention and prevention. Both the DV Coordinator and MARAC Coordinator work closely with the project. The partnership is well represented and strategic and operational group level by appropriate seniority from the key agencies.

Recommendation 3: An action plan should be agreed amongst the new partnership which describes a deliverable and realistic set of outcomes

The Barnet Domestic Violence Strategy has an Action Plan for 2010/11 and the Action Plan for 2011-12/13 has highlighted the developments that still need to be taken forward for 2011/12 and

2012/13. The action plans are made available to the DVSB and the DV Operational Group for scrutiny and are RAG rated.

Recommendation 4: Consideration should be given to co-locating the core activities (but not the services) relevant to a coordinated approach

There is an ongoing commitment by IDVA services and other organisations to protecting all victims of violence. There has been discussion about the fragmentation of service provision in the borough at strategic and operational level. The DV Operational Group have set up a commissioning project team to review current services, and SLAs, and to develop a model of provision which is being taken forward part of a formal commissioning process for domestic violence provision in Barnet. Three areas of provision have been reviewed (refuge, floating support and a developing a perpetrator service) and are being re-commissioned; in particular a single model for floating support and IDVA provision is being developed with a view to supporting all victims (from low – medium, high risk and very high risk) to address historic issues and conflict about which organisations support high risk victims and which organisations support those victims at the lower end of identified risk.

The Safer Families Project (Children's Services) works with families at the lower end of the chain – it is those families that may be involved with social care; however most of the families that the project works with are those at the lower end of the social care threshold for Social Care involvement.

Recommendation 5: A new specialist support service for victims of DV be commissioned according to a very thorough service specification

The Council is undergoing the re-commissioning of domestic violence provision in Barnet. The process started earlier this year, with an expected end date of October 2011 when successful providers will be awarded contracts. A detailed specification has been developed for such services (Refuge, Floating Support, and Perpetrator Service). The eligibility criteria are mapped against existing best practice in domestic violence, and by bench marking with other boroughs.

Q2. Contact Islington to share good practice of Whittington project

The Whittington project, based on the Cardiff Model seeks to reduce violence in the community, with a corresponding reduction in both crime and associated injuries. There are three main domains for the project; domestic violence, serious youth violence, and elder abuse. The Whittington project has been carefully considered. Serious structural changes in Health within Barnet are currently taking place as a result of historic and current budget gaps, the impact of the Comprehensive Spending Review and the uncertainty surrounding NHS reforms.

Barnet BOCU aim to initially focus on Domestic Violence, before broadening its scope to include serious youth violence and abuse of the elderly. Barnet have begun piloting ways of working and identifying systems to ensure effective data capture from patients attending the Emergency Department at Barnet General Hospital (BGH). Working with the DV co-

ordinator, there has been an emphasis on staff training and the implementation of policy and standard operating procedures at BGH for patients disclosing DV. An enhanced referral pathway to specialist domestic violence agencies is currently being explored to include working across local authority boundaries.

Q3. Update on the impact of the SDVC on victims views

The process for capturing this data is currently being explored by the SDVC operational group. Initial suggestions are that data should be collated through the Witness Service and not our Service provider i.e. Elevate, so that there are no integrity issues. A senior point of contact in the witness service has been identified as the most appropriate lead. However the questions to be asked have not yet been fully agreed through the SDVC and DVOG boards. The consideration of data not only relating to post charge but also pre-charge cases requires extensive deliberation to ensure accurate and effective feedback. The provision of qualitative data from service providers has been made part of the current commissioning process.

Q4. Update on third party reporting figures

There are 23 third party reporting sites in Barnet. Only 4 have the capability to provide a DV service but the others are capable of providing literature and signposting survivors to appropriate agencies as necessary. There is a very poor record of referrals into the police service and no data capture of referrals to other agencies. In 18 months only 2 hate crimes were reported to police using this method. However, the police diversity officer has been working with the sites to establish a new electronic reporting framework and raise awareness and training. The sites provide very broad geographical and community diversity reach throughout the borough and operate at very little cost to the partnership. They will continue to be supported and encouraged to provide referrals. It is too early to state the effect of the new framework which was launched by the Borough Commander and Director of Adult Social Services at a hate crimes conference in March 2011.

Q5. Update on the impact of piloting community budgets

The concept of pooled community budgets for the partnership is focused on the Family Intervention Project which aims to target the top 100 families causing the partnership most expense and through a combination of incentive and sanction change the course of those families' lives. An 18 month project with 9 families showed impressive results and partners are currently supplying data through information sharing protocols, finance and 'in kind' assets (e.g. the police safer neighbourhood family) to support the programme.

The community safety partnership following the intervention of the Borough Commander, has invested £320k in this project from the monies directed by the GLA and the Local Authority has base-lined the funding for the community protection budget and DV services from within it's core budget. This still means that the DV budget has faced a 20% cut like other areas of business, but the community based budget approach has not added to that burden.

It is highly likely that families chosen for the project will be suffering DV issues and the project is led by the Director of Children's Services who co-chairs the DV Strategy Board so the strategic link between the two issues is well established. There are no longer any

concerns that this new Government approach will be detrimental to the DV action plan. Quite the reverse - there may be significant advantages. The project's framework is largely based on existing multi-agency conference arrangements such as MARAC and is therefore seen as best practice in problem solving through partnership arrangements.

Q6. MARAC development update

The aim of the MARAC is to reduce repeat victimisation by ensuring that there are robust measures in place to support victims and their families. The number of repeat cases is monitored by the DV Team on quarterly basis, and this also scrutinised by CAADA (see table 1). Targets for reducing repeat victimisation are set by CAADA, these targets have been met for 2010-2011.

A training programme is being developed for all professionals and practitioners including those in Children's Social Care. This is in order to increase referrals to the MARAC and to reduce repeat victimisation through information sharing as part of a coordinated response by all agencies in contact with families. This will be organised by the MARAC Coordinator over the coming year

A Task and Finish Group was set up in October 2010. This was a short term project group which was set up for six months to look at developing measures to improve MARAC processes in accordance with the CAADA evaluation in December 2010. The areas of improvement required that were highlighted by the evaluation were:

- An increase of referrals to MARAC
- Representation by key agencies at MARAC
- An improved focus on the needs of and engagement of victims
- Improvements to the MARAC Operational Protocol

Since the Task and Finish group agreed on a way forward to improve the MARAC in January, the DV Team have been carrying out background checks to ensure that the required improvements have been made. This has involved ensuring that supporting evidence and documents have been saved to support our evidence e.g. protocols from IDVA services and the police which prove that assessments are carried out within deadlines. The probation service has completed reorganized its service as a result of the MARAC chairman's intervention, and improved attendance.

Barnet MARAC still disputes CAADA's insistence on continuing to increase the number of high risk cases referred. Although we have lowered the threshold test to the 10 point threshold and this has increased the number, we would resist further pressure to increase cases where agencies do not believe the test is met. This avoids over-loading the conference with cases which creates a risk in itself.

Barnet police and IDVA services through the DVSS who deal with high and very high risk cases have been successful at removing risk at the earliest opportunity which has prevented some cases from being taken to MARAC. The Chairperson will now consider whether these cases should be noted to MARAC (rather than discussed).

Yours sincerely



Detective Chief Superintendent Neil Basu
Barnet Borough Commander



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