



Metropolitan Police Authority

Domestic Violence Board – 19th September 2006

TOWER HAMLETS BOROUGH RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Summary

This report is forwarded to give members of the MPA Domestic Violence Board an insight into the work undertaken by Tower Hamlets Borough Operational Command Unit (Tower Hamlets BOCU) to support the MPA-owned multi-agency boards ability to monitor and scrutinise MPS performance on domestic violence; highlight best practice and innovation, and support the MPS to identify solutions to improving performance in keeping survivors safe and holding perpetrators to account.

Supporting information

Keep survivors safe

1. Tower Hamlets Borough operates a strict adherence to the standard operating procedure developed by the Racial and Violent Crime Task Force. We have developed this further still by incorporating the investigation of crimes that do not fall within the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) definition of domestic violence. The ACPO definition is as follows:

“Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults, aged 18 and over, who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender and sexuality (family members are defined as mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister and grandparents, whether directly related, in-laws or step family)”.

2. Tower Hamlets Community Safety Unit (CSU) will investigate all cases that fall within this definition regardless of the age considerations. The purpose of this is ensure that the expertise developed by the community safety unit is applied to this vulnerable victim group, there being no distinction between domestic violence between for example partners aged 17 and 18 and those aged 18 and 18 or over.

3. A primary responsibility of both front line officers and Community Safety Unit officers is the safety and well being of the victim. This is achieved by a robust positive arrest policy, the completion of book 124d including a risk assessment and the referral to partner agencies both statutory and voluntary. Every domestic violence incident is brought to the attention of a gatekeeper supervisor who assesses the initial investigation and completes a supervisor template, which ensures that the victim's immediate needs and the quality of the investigation is to the standards expected. This includes research of history between parties involved using both previously recorded crimes and the intelligence databases. It is also a requirement to ensure that all children's details have been obtained and a Merlin report completed for the attention of local child protection teams and social services. In addition a CRIMINT entry (Criminal Intelligence Log) is made for every case of domestic violence. The supervisor's template is entered onto the CRIS (Crime Reporting Information System) as part of the investigation.
4. Book 124d follows the risk identification/assessment model and requires initial investigating officers to ask a specific set of questions, the answers to which will formulate the risk as standard, medium or high. Risk management is achieved by one of four methods, remove the risk, avoid the risk, reduce the risk or accept the risk. In each case a supervising officer assesses the initial investigating officers review and confirms via the template whether they agree or not and if they do not, their assessment is shown along with action required.
5. From July 2006 the Victim Support Scheme now operates from the Community Safety Unit (as well as their local office). This has been achieved by the positive work of partner agencies led by the local authority domestic violence team. There are five domestic violence advocates employed by Tower Hamlets victim support scheme and each of them works one day a week (Monday to Friday) within the Community Safety Unit alongside investigating officers. They contact all victims of crime with the exception of those who have specifically declined their services. This ensures that there is no delay in victims receiving the support they require.
6. Domestic Violence advocates came into existence at Tower Hamlets in 2001 with the assistance of Home Office funding. They work with the Victim Support Scheme. The role of Independent Advocacy is defined by the Greater London Authority Domestic Violence Strategy (November 2005) as follows:

“Independent advocacy involves the professional provision of advice, information and support to survivors of intimate partner violence in the

community about the range, effectiveness and suitability of options to improve their safety and that of children. This advice must be based on a thorough understanding and assessment of risk and its management, where possible as part of a multi-agency risk management strategy or MARAC process. Independent advocates typically provide short to medium term casework, focusing on safety advice covering improved physical security as well as remedies available from the civil and criminal justice systems. An independent advocate provides this service both at the point of crises and in relation to medium-term safety and support. The work of such advocates has clear and measurable outcomes in terms of improved safety and reduction in repeat offences. The services should be provided in such a way to be sensitive to all cultural and other differences and needs. The advocate also helps to ensure that all agencies involved in an individual case fulfil their obligations”.

7. Independent Advocates are trained by Victim Support London. Basic training takes place over a period of five days and will address counselling and communication skills, the civil and criminal courts and partners within the criminal justice system. Specialist domestic violence training takes place over four days. The outcomes of advocate intervention are recorded in terms of contact namely letters, telephone calls, home or office visits together with customer satisfaction surveys. Tower Hamlets Domestic Violence Action Team Service User Consultation for May 2005 noted that 45% of respondents felt safe after accessing their services.

Tackle domestic violence

8. Domestic violence is tackled by positive intervention both for the victim and for the perpetrator. All front line officers are aware that the positive arrest policy must be enforced in all but exceptional cases. This ensures that where a power of arrest exists we are confident that the perpetrator will be arrested and be subject of a criminal investigation. This is reinforced internally by team briefings, regular e-mail updates, daily supervision by the senior management team and personal feedback to officers. Externally, local media contact is utilised and a number of features have been run on the front pages of local newspapers.
9. The arrest of perpetrators ensures the removal from the home (or elsewhere). This ensures that investigating officers are able to speak to the victim and obtain as much information as possible to gather the evidence required for a prosecution and identify the support needs of the victim. This is difficult to achieve with the

perpetrator present, whose presence alone may influence the decisions of the victim and in many cases result in the victim withdrawing support. From April 2006 to June 2006 Tower Hamlets Police arrested 95% of perpetrators who were present at the scene where a power of arrest existed. This is the highest positive arrest rate in London.

10. Within the Community Safety Unit investigating officers identify those cases where particular concerns exist and these are referred to the local Safety Planning Panel (SPP). Also referred to this panel are the repeat victims/perpetrators identified through monthly Borough Intelligence Unit research. This research highlights those cases where repeat victimisation has occurred and the most serious cases are automatically referred.
11. The Safety Planning Panel is chaired by the local authority domestic violence co-ordinator and attended by Victim Support, Police, Homelessness Service, Primary Care Trust, Social Services, Anti Social Behaviour Control Unit, Drug and Alcohol Intervention Project, Tower Hamlets Women's Aid, Women's Domestic Violence/Substance misuse worker and Probation Services. Each agency has signed to the panels terms of reference and information is shared under section 115 Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The aim of the panel is to review and co-ordinate service provision in high-risk domestic violence cases. The panel meets monthly and there is regular contact between members outside of the meeting.

Hold Offenders to Account

12. A dynamic and committed Detective Inspector, who has attracted equally enthusiastic staff, leads Tower Hamlets Borough's Community Safety Unit. The drive of this team has secured support from senior management team members and most significantly from the Chief Inspector responsible for patrol activity. The internal partnership arrangement between the initial investigators and the community safety unit teams has delivered an impressive arrest and detection rate on one of the highest volume Borough's within the Metropolitan Police Service. This performance culture is a reflection of the commitment the Borough Commander and his executive team have towards the reduction of risk associated with violent crime, in particular domestic violence.
13. We continue to enjoy high levels of performance and success by driving the message that domestic violence will not be tolerated and positive action will be taken. In cases where the victim refuses to assist police, officers will continue to

gather evidence. Each case will be dealt with on an individual basis and if there is sufficient evidence it will be put to the Crown Prosecution Service for a decision on charge. In assault cases police have to consider the victims future safety and assess the possibility of the suspect committing further assaults. Police have a duty to make every reasonable effort to protect victims identified as being at risk and take action to ensure violent offenders do not escape the consequences of their actions. In some cases prosecution will occur regardless of the victim's wishes. Investigators are fully aware that in each case a sanctioned detection should be sought and early liaison with the Crown Prosecution Service is essential. We demonstrate our commitment to victims by taking positive action to arrest and to hold to account those persons who commit domestic violence offences.

14. Community Safety Unit investigators ensure that in all cases the perpetrator is pursued. This will include those who leave the local area or in extreme case the UK to avoid prosecution. Measures are in place to monitor the progress of violent crime and this will include domestic violence cases. Intrusive supervision of crimes where perpetrators have been bailed pending further enquiries (such as forensic examinations), or where suspects fail to answer bail ensures that timely action is taken to progress the case.
15. Publicity campaigns, aimed at officers and staff within the MPS as well as members of the public at National and Local level, are continually targeted at perpetrators of domestic violence. These campaigns inform victims and perpetrators that police will take action and prosecute offenders for criminal offences.
16. Tower Hamlets has been asked to report to the Metropolitan Police Authority based on its performance between 04 April 2005 and 22 January 2006 where it had achieved a sanctioned detection rate of 35.1%. Since many of the areas highlighted in this report have been implemented and/or improved the latest figures from 01 April 2006 to 02 July 2006 show a sanctioned detection rate of 45% (higher than the best performing Borough for the previous financial year). This can be attributed to constant reinforcement of the positive arrest message and senior management scrutiny of domestic violence crime.

Prevent Domestic Violence

17. The impact of positive action is considered to be an important factor in the

prevention of domestic violence. It is difficult to assess actual reporting figures with any certainty as a reduction or increase can be viewed in different ways. For example do we receive more reports because victims are more confident in police action or because the incidents are increasing and alternatively do we receive less reports for the same reasons.

18. A key strand of our work towards prevention lies with our work on repeat victimisation within the Safety Planning Panel. This panel consists of representatives from Police, Primary Care Trust, Tower Hamlets Domestic Violence Team, Tower Hamlets VSS, Mental Health, Probation, Tower Hamlets Anti Social Behaviour Unit, Substance Misuse Teams and Tower Hamlets Housing. Cases are reviewed by panel members and intervention measures are implemented, which can include advice and support to victims, inclusion in sanctuary project¹, prosecution (if the case has not previously been referred to police), re-housing, anti social behaviour injunctions, or intervention by social services (particularly where children are adversely affected).

Working in partnership with organisations and communities to continuously improve the BOCU's response to domestic violence

19. Tower Hamlets Community Safety Unit has strong links with a number of partnership agencies and this is reinforced by the presence of a dedicated partnership Detective Sergeant who has her own role profile. This officer is responsible for most of our partnership work and attends the monthly Safety Planning Panel Meetings, the Monthly Victim Support Scheme meetings, the quarterly Domestic Violence forum and the quarterly Vulnerable Adult Multi Agency Steering Group meeting. It should be noted that these relationships extend to Hate Crime, which is another key responsibility for the Community Safety Unit.

20. Partnership work is seen as a key factor to success and at present the following statutory and voluntary organisations are involved:

- Sapphire Unit
- Child Abuse Investigation Teams

¹ The Sanctuary Project is a partnership between the council, the police, voluntary sector domestic violence services and specialist contractors and aims to increase safe choices for victims. Victims often face homelessness as a result of the violence against them and this scheme gives them the option to remain safely within their home through the provision of free, tailored security. Crime prevention officers and a Sanctuary support officer also provide advice and support on safety issues.

- Response Teams
- Safer Neighbourhood Teams
- Racial and Violent Crime Task Force
- Violent Crime Directorate
- MPS Diversity and Citizen Focus Directorate
- London Borough Tower Hamlets Domestic Violence Team
- All members of Safety Planning Panel as described

A. Data

21. It has been requested that data is supplied reflecting the period August 2005 to July 2006. At the time of this report data was not available for June or July 2006 and Performance Directorate have therefore supplied data from **01 June 2005 to 31 May 2006**. Also, there have been a number of changes since April 2006, which are explained elsewhere in this report.
22. Between 01 June 2005 and 31 May 2006 there were 4005 domestic violence incidents recorded on CRIS. This covers all incidents where a domestic violence flag (DV) was entered on the CRIS report. Of these 2360 were actual offences therefore 1645 were recorded as non crime domestic incidents or in plain terms those cases where a domestic incident had occurred but no identified offence had been committed.
23. During the same period in 67% of all cases where a power of arrest existed that power of arrest was exercised. At this point it should be highlighted that from 01 April 2006 all Tower Hamlets officers were instructed to comply with the standard operating procedures and ensure that where a power of arrest existed then this was exercised and the latest data available from 01 April 2006 to 02 July 2006 shows this figure to be 95%. This is a considerable increase in performance and this is managed daily by close scrutiny of domestic violence crime during the daily management meeting by senior management team. Any incident where a power of arrest was available but not used is immediately highlighted and reasons sought.
24. There were 297 cases of repeat victimisation over the period June 2005 to May 2006 representing 12% of all domestic violence victims. The average number of incidents per repeat victim was 2.4. The work implemented by the Safety Planning Panel since April 2006 is designed to tackle this further with the express

aim of reducing these levels.

25. The sanction detection rate between June 2005 and May 2006 was 37.8%. With changes introduced from 01 April 2006 this currently stands (as of 02 July 2006) at 45% and had this figure been attained during the previous financial year this would have placed Tower Hamlets as the best performing Borough in the Metropolitan Police District. This year to 02 July 2006 we are the fourth highest performing Borough with only Havering, Richmond and Sutton performing better. In terms of comparable Boroughs we are achieving significant improvements in bringing offenders to justice.
26. There were 893 sanctioned detections between 01 June 2005 and 31 May 2006. These are 391 charge/summons, 473 cautions, 27 fixed penalty notices and 2 taken into consideration. Cautions like charges must have sufficient evidence to make conviction more likely than acquittal. In the case of indictable only offences the decision making process rests with the CPS. In all other cases the decision to caution is the responsibility of a police officer of inspecting rank but only after the perpetrator has admitted the offence. Every case is reviewed individually. The review mirrors that of the CPS and considers the specific gravity factors of the offence, public interest and the views of the victim.
27. There were 382 incidents charged by the Crown Prosecution Service.
28. There were only 13 charges of offences of GBH or 'above'.
29. There were no cases of honour based violence or forced marriage recorded by police during the review period. However, partnership working, specifically that of the Tower Hamlets Domestic Violence Team provide practical information in colleges and community centres. There are also a number of trained workers that provide advice and support to people who may be experiencing honour based violence or forced marriage. Partnership working is based on confidentiality and only when they have the agreement of the victim will the matter be passed to police for investigation. This is an area for improvement and one that is currently under review locally and throughout the Metropolitan Police.
30. There were 19 cases where survivors were identified as having mental health issues.
31. There were no domestic violence homicides during the dates shown and as

mentioned elsewhere there have been no such incidents since 19th December 2004.

32. There have been no domestic violence homicide reviews between the dates shown.
33. Data expressing age and ethnicity has been obtained and is detailed below. There will be discrepancies between some of the figures supplied as in some cases there will be more than one victim recorded. Examples of this will include where children were involved or another party was assaulted intentionally, inadvertently or as a result of intervening.
34. Of 2910 victims there were 198 aged between 0 and 16, 919 aged between 17 and 25, 1154 aged between 26 and 40, 490 aged between 41 and 55 and 149 aged 56 or over.
35. Of 2633 victims there were 532 recorded as Asian, 111 recorded as Black, 21 recorded as Chinese or other, 26 recorded as Mixed Race, 565 recorded as White and 1378 recorded as unknown. This highlights some failures in the recording system as the information would have been available in the vast majority of cases but has not been accurately documented. The failings identified here will be addressed in a wider action plan to improve the standard of data recording by investigating officers.
36. Of 2768 victims there were 2095 recorded as female, 651 as male, two as unknown and 20 cases were not correctly recorded.

B. Policy compliance, implementation and quality assurance

37. Between 01 June 2005 and 31 May 2006 there were 4698 computer aided despatch (CAD) messages with a 'type' code 29 (type code is the flag applied on receipt of the initial call and code 29 relates to domestic violence). During the same period there were 3431 CAD messages with a 'class' code 29 (class code is the flag applied once the call has been dealt with). This compares with 4005 allegations recorded as DV on CRIS.
38. The reasons for the higher figure in initial calls can be explained by duplicate calls to the same incident or officers creating additional messages following on from a previously recorded incident, for example if the offender has left the scene it may

be necessary to despatch officers to an alternate address or location in an effort to arrest that person. It is clear from the higher figure in CRIS recorded allegations that many victims report direct at the station or in some cases through the internet, at third party sites or by telephone.

39. Between 01 April 2005 and 30 April 2006 the Metropolitan Police Service recorded domestic violence crimes in an average of 81.4% of all initial calls to Police that were tagged as domestic violence. During the same period Tower Hamlets recorded 79%, which although slightly under the overall London average was typical of many other Boroughs.
40. The gatekeeper Sergeant, who as part of the supervision template is required to check and confirm the accuracy of the flagging system, supervises all initial reports of domestic violence. The requirement exists to carry out this function within four hours of the initial report however it is accepted that on occasion this may not occur, particularly on a busy Inner London Borough. A gatekeeper sergeant is posted on every day and night shift (Tower Hamlets operates a 12 hour response policing shift system).
41. Every domestic violence CRIS is supervised and screened in by the crime management unit (CMU), who also quality assure the CRIS. This will include correct use of flags, repeat victim, classification, victim charter, and supervision. Every domestic violence CRIS is 'screened in' to the Community Safety Unit and checked by the duty Detective Sergeant prior to allocation to an investigating officer. These are also dip sampled by the Detective Inspector. In addition every morning a Community Safety Unit briefing sheet is prepared and appended to the Daily Management Meeting for senior management teams to inspect.
42. The Community Safety Unit briefing sheet details the number of domestic violence incidents recorded over the previous 24 hours, any cases where the supervision template was not used, any cases where a power of arrest existed but was not used, any case where a book 124d has not been recorded as complete and any other issues that may affect the quality of information recorded.
43. The first and most important stage of the initial investigative process is the gatekeeper supervision. It is at this point that the main offence is identified. The gatekeeper Sergeant would identify the resources required and for example, in the case of rape, contact the duty Detective to ensure that a sexual offences investigation trained officer (SOIT) is assigned. Where other offences are

identified such as domestic violence or child abuse then the relevant unit will be contacted and consultation between the department heads over primacy of investigation. This will not delay the initial investigation and ensures that all department heads are aware of the allegation and work together to provide the appropriate expertise. It is important to ensure that a clear lead in the investigation is identified. Tower Hamlets Borough has had many successful examples of investigations crossing the remits of different units.

44. Tower Hamlets recognises that the book 124d is an essential tool to tackle domestic violence. With the engagement of the Chief Inspector Operations all officers has been instructed to complete book 124d and ensure it is provided to the Community Safety Unit as soon after as possible. The gatekeeper template includes certification that this has been done. Each morning administrative support staff receives book 124d, they reference them against the CRIS by entering the reference number in the investigation details and ensuring all book 124d's are stored and referenced. This is further checked at the daily management meeting. Recent Domestic Violence awareness training has emphasised this important task.
45. There are several examples of cases where the book 124d has been used to provide the victim's key evidence. It is known that in many domestic violence cases victims, for a variety of reasons, subsequently withdraw their support for a prosecution, in many cases by the next day. The gathering of initial statements ensures that the Crown Prosecution Service have sight of all available evidence but almost as important is the ability of investigators to interview perpetrators armed with an account of what actually happened. It is recognised that the quality of book 124d varies and training and feedback is in progress to ensure a set of minimum standards is followed.
46. Every individual case requires a risk assessment both within book 124d and on the CRIS. The gatekeeper Sergeant, who certifies that it is appropriate and accurate, confirms this. Remedial action is taken if necessary. The positive arrest policy has resulted in this Borough ensuring that in 95% of all domestic violence incidents where a power of arrest exists and the suspect is present that the power of arrest is exercised. This is by far the most effective way of removing immediate risk although there are clearly a number of cases where the perpetrator has left the scene but still poses a risk to the victim. Every case requires the SPECSS+ formula to be applied.

SPECSS+ is a risk assessment tool that asks the investigating officer to consider the following factors when assessing the risk victims of domestic violence may face. It identifies the heightened risk factors of:

- **S**eparation / child contact issues.
- **P**regnancy / new birth.
- **E**scalation of physical assaults.
- **C**ultural awareness / isolation.
- **S**talking
- **S**exual assault
- **+** Abuse of children / pets, use of / access to weapons, drug / alcohol problems, acutely jealous / controlling behaviour, threats to kill, mental health, suicidal tendencies.

Where a risk is identified it is managed using the RARA process.

- **R**emove the risk: By arresting the suspect and obtaining a remand in custody.
- **A**void the risk: By obtaining non-molestation/occupation orders against perpetrator or re-housing the victim/significant witnesses or placement in refuge/shelter in location unknown to suspect.
- **R**educe the risk: By multi agency intervention/victim safety planning, crime prevention and use of protective legislation i.e. bail conditions, injunctions etc., monitoring by Safer Neighbourhood teams.
- **A**ccept the risk: By intervention and safety planning, constant review of the risk assessment and offender targeting within the PATP (Pro-Active Tasking Proforma) / MAPP (Multi Agency Public Protection) format.

47. This initial assessment is used to inform the investigative team of immediate and longer-term risks and in appropriate cases referral to the Safety Planning Panel.

48. There have been no murders on Tower Hamlets Borough since 19th December 2004. The last murder recorded was a domestic violence homicide. The murder review group have responsibility for all homicides that occur within the Metropolitan Police District and learning from these particular cases are fed back

to the borough where appropriate. Learning from reviews is not limited to homicide investigations. A review conducted under the terms of Chapter 8 Children Act 1989 into injuries received by child on this borough identified improvements to be made in informing partner agencies of children coming to police notice. The recommendation has been implemented in full and is a feature of training.

C. Resources

49. The Borough Workforce Target for the Community Safety Unit is as follows:

- one Detective Inspector
- five Detective Sergeants
- four Detective Constables
- eight trainee Detective Constables
- eight Police Constables
- two administrative staff

50. The demographic profile of Tower Hamlets Community Safety Unit Officers is as follows:

- One male Detective Inspector
- One female Detective Sergeant
- Four male Detective Sergeants
- One female Detective Constable
- Three male Detective Constables
- Three female trainee Detective Constables
- Five male trainee Detective Constables
- Two female Police Constables
- Five male Police Constable (one vacant post at present)
- Two female administrative support staff

51. There are six black and minority ethnic members of staff including one Detective Sergeant, one Detective Constable, one trainee Detective Constable, two Police Constables and one administrative support staff.

52. Of the twelve constables of Detective rank, four are substantive rank and the remaining eight are trainee. They are posted for 6- month periods before rotating to other departments within the CID to ensure a breadth of experience and skills are collated.
53. There is currently one vacancy at Police Constable rank within the Community Safety Unit. This is reflected elsewhere within the Borough CID departments where both similar vacancies and similar demands on performance exist.
54. This vacancy is due to movement of staff from Police Constable to trainee Detective Constable. It is recognised that the Community Safety Unit provides Police Constables with a wide range of skills that make them eligible for progression to Detective role. In the last selection process four Police Constables from the Community Safety Unit successfully applied for the trainee Detective Constable scheme. Metropolitan Police policy currently states that on selection these officers will be posted to Borough's where they are required and from there a development plan is set locally. The resultant vacancies are then advertised; however there are demands on all departments and the release of individual officers to fill the vacancies these officers leave behind is not always possible.
55. There is an established Community Safety Unit course run by the Crime Academy at Hendon Police Training College. Places are limited but we attempt to obtain courses for all new Police Constables joining the unit. Trainee Detective Constables attend specific courses for their development and due to the 6-month posting it is difficult to allocate courses. For example a new officer arriving may have to wait four or five months by which time they are approaching their next posting date and the benefit of the training compared with the loss of the officer for the duration of the course is a significant consideration. Whilst there are obvious benefits in the Crime Academy course there are common strands in investigative practice. Locally delivered MPS domestic violence and multi-agency training augment these core skills.
56. There are two full time administrative Police staff within the Community Safety Unit. They have a clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
57. The domestic violence champion is Detective Inspector Kevin Baldwin. His function is as follows:
- A requirement to remain on the unit for at least 12 months to prevent loss of

expertise and ensure continuity with victims and partner agencies

- Terms of reference for CSU staff
- Staff compliance with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
- Welfare support for CSU Staff
- Whilst embracing the staff needs for flexible working, ensure an effective rota system to provide a professional level of service and operational efficiency
- Effective training for investigating officers
- Representation at Borough DV Forums
- Domestic Violence Murder Review process implemented
- Inclusion of DV in local CDRP strategies including the Prolific and Priority Offenders Scheme
- Inclusion of DV in Borough Strategic and Tactical Coordinated Tasking groups
- Borough Intelligence Unit focus desks for DV
- Protocols for information sharing, referrals and Third Party Reporting with partner agencies
- Representation on MAPPPs (Multi Agency Public Protection Panels)
- Support for TP Crime Directorate Athena Days²
- Provision of literature and contact numbers for partner agencies for victims
- Identify and share good practice through the Diversity Directorate website
- System for timely victim updates re: charge / bail, court appearances, bail conditions, court results etc
- System for improving detection opportunities
- Robust monitoring of the positive action policy
- Partner agency workers within CSU
- Use of media to promote DV strategy
- Strategy to prevent re-victimisation

² Operation Athena is a Met-wide campaign targeting domestic violence and all other types of hate crime, including racism and homophobia.

- Compliance with the MPS/CPS Service Level Agreement (SLA)
- Identify designated liaison officer to link CSU to other internal units
- Supervise and monitor investigations by regular dip sampling of CRIS

58. Since the introduction of Detective's to Community Safety Unit's, a clear career progression opportunity, coupled with the field of domestic violence becoming more specialised, the work of the CSU is seen as a key area of any Detective or aspiring Detectives portfolio. With investigations covering a wide range of offences and the opportunity of meaningful partnership work it is now a sought after post. Senior management support and that of colleagues within both the CID and uniform branches reinforce this recognition. The recent Domestic Violence Awareness training raised the profile of the CSU and the importance of the work they do.

59. At the scene of crime or at the point of reporting investigating officers are expected to collect all available evidence. In order to fulfil this requirement they have access to Domestic Violence Report Books (124d's), early evidence kits and Iceflow cameras. They also have direct access via mobile telephone and airwave radio to experienced Detective Sergeant's and Identification Officers for advice and guidance. This is available twenty-four hours per day.

60. Photographic evidence is powerful evidence. However, there have been problems with the maintenance and supply of Iceflow cameras and this is an area where improvements could be made particularly with the use of digital technology to capture better quality evidence. The photographs of victim's displaying injuries are often one of the critical factors that ensure the evidence meets the threshold test and is therefore placed before the Crown Prosecution Service for a charging decision.

61. The performance culture of Tower Hamlets Borough is supported by an effective management information system. This is reviewed daily at the daily management meeting where each case is considered and outcomes measured in terms of charge, caution or other disposals. The Detective Chief Inspector holding the violent crime portfolio is held to account for daily performance.

62. The Community Safety Unit has a clear identified team manager (Detective Inspector) and a structure that ensures each of the four teams is led by an experienced Detective Sergeant. They are held to account for performance of

individual teams and officers and have performance development objectives designed to focus on the key objectives of the domestic violence strategy. In addition to the daily management focus each case is reviewed by the duty Detective Sergeant who documents an initial investigation strategy prior to allocating the investigating officer. This ensures each investigator has clear direction. These cases are regularly reviewed by the Detective Sergeants and where charges have been preferred trained gatekeepers prior to submission to the Crown Prosecution Service further review the case file. There are monthly meetings for supervisors where performance is examined and changes are discussed and implemented where necessary.

63. Leadership and supervision of domestic violence cases can be summarised as follows:

- Receipt of initial call/contact referred to gatekeeper sergeant for supervision and completion of template.
- Where an arrest has been made the custody officer is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984
- Where an arrest has not been made response team officers retain the arrest enquiry for twenty-four hours and revisit the venue or other known addresses to arrest the perpetrator. If this has not occurred before they complete their shift a CAD message is created for the next team
- In either case supervisors must ensure that the risk assessment and management has been applied.
- Each CRIS is checked and quality assured by the crime management unit and 'screened in' for community safety unit investigators
- CSU Detective Sergeant reviews each allegation and formulates investigation strategy and allocates investigating officer
- VSS advocate makes contact with the victim and appropriate supports services are offered.
- Every perpetrator of domestic violence is arrested either immediately or subsequently in the case of those who were not present at the scene.
- Positive action days implemented weekly on a Thursday to track down those perpetrators who have proved difficult to locate. This is supported by a

dedicated uniform arrest team and backed up by an investigative team tasked for that day

- Suspects are circulated as wanted via the police national computer, local briefings and if appropriate briefing passed to other force areas.
 - Support from other Boroughs/Forces is sought and obtained to arrest perpetrators who leave the Tower Hamlets area.
 - Forensic/photographic evidence is utilised when available
 - Crown Prosecution Service lawyers are presented with supervised cases that contain all documented history, witness and forensic evidence and bad character evidence. These cases are proactively pursued
 - Victim personal statements are a feature of the case file. Officers are aware that it is an important element of the victims account for the prosecution.
 - Appeals procedure is invoked where Police and CPS disagree
 - All cases are considered for referral to Safety Planning Panel and partnership Detective Sergeant oversees and implements this process
 - All investigators are aware of and use form DV1 to refer cases for support and in urgent cases directly by telephone
64. Tower Hamlets works closely with the Racial and Violent Crime Task Force on a daily basis. All CSU Managers attend monthly meetings at New Scotland Yard and performance, practices and challenges ahead are discussed and reviewed. Tower Hamlets have been allocated a dedicated Detective Constable liaison officer who maintains monthly contact. On a daily basis TP review all domestic incident cases through their analysts and any cases where concerns exist are highlighted for action.

D. Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP)

65. The overall budget of the CDRP is £4,059,000.

66. The amount dedicated to tackling domestic violence is £238,469.

67. It is recognised that 25% of all assaults are domestic violence related and as a

result domestic violence is a priority with the Crime and Disorder Strategy

68. CDRP domestic violence projects are included within the Violent Crime Action Group (VCAG) meeting and form part of the action plan. These include:

- £30,000 for funding of domestic violence advocates within the community safety unit working alongside investigators
- £10,000 for funding of a project examining the introduction of a reporting site at the Royal London Hospital A&E
- £30,000 for developing a training program for health visitors and primary health care staff for the identification of DV where children may be at risk
- £65,000 for extending the DV Forum's community education and awareness program including development of the "Warrior Women" holistic personal safety training – in partnership with women's community groups
- £30,000 for increasing safe housing options for families facing homelessness due to domestic violence
- £58,000 to provide specialist support to vulnerable victims and witnesses of sexual and domestic violence cases that are prosecuted through the criminal justice system

69. Other projects met through existing budgets include:

- Developing a program of work to address domestic violence perpetrators
- Undertaking a comprehensive review of commissioning of children's DV services
- Review and re-launch of the domestic violence and child protection interagency protocol to incorporate recommendations arising from serious case reviews and legislative changes
- Increasing the capacity of the NCH Barika Project to provide specialist support to children and parents and to provide support to schools on responding to pupils affected by domestic violence
- Developing the role of the multi-agency domestic violence safety planning panel to develop common approaches to risk assessment and information sharing in high risk domestic violence cases

E. Partnership working

70. Tower Hamlets BOCU currently works with the following statutory and voluntary organisations: Victim Support, Homelessness Service, Primary Care Trust, Social Services, Anti Social Behaviour Control Unit, Drug and Alcohol Intervention Project, Tower Hamlets Women's Aid, Women's Domestic Violence/Substance misuse worker and Probation Services
71. All referrals are undertaken by the completion of form DV1 or the Safety Planning Template, which documents the details of the parties involved, the relationship, children's details, details of past history and whether the persons involved are known to other agencies. This referral is then sent to all partners with a request to check their own databases and establish whether they know them. This informs the meeting of current action being taken and appropriate action still required. It also avoids unnecessary duplication of work.
72. Independent Advocates who work within the Victim Support Scheme are co-located with police in the Community Safety Unit. Their role is one of crises intervention in that they offer help and support of partnership agencies where appropriate. The expertise of these advocates play an important part in helping victims survive the crime and can maintain their engagement with the criminal justice system.
73. Feedback is received through the domestic violence advocates both at the local authority and the victim support scheme and as previously stated victim satisfaction surveys are completed. Tower Hamlets Domestic Violence Action Team user satisfaction survey of May 2005 rated police at 4.5 out of a possible maximum of 5. The most recent feedback completed by the VSS (April to March 2006) show 35% of respondents rating the police as 'very useful' when reporting a crime, a 2% drop on last year. However, 9% more victims felt the service they received was useful. Whilst the findings of this report are contrary to the performance of police in respect of bringing offenders to justice, there are areas for improvement in reporting of crime, contacting the police, investigation and keeping victims informed. These specific issues are being addressed by process improvements brought about by the Victims Code of Practice. There are positive comments on police performance and a snap shot summary of cases are: "...Becky (SOIT) has been my life....easy to contact the officer....FLO (Family Liaison Officer) was brilliant....took me seriously...found the OIC very supportive....I feel the case was well investigated"

F. Training

74. The training unit at Tower Hamlets has delivered Domestic Violence Awareness training to all Police Officers, PCSO's and support staff up to and including the rank of Inspector. This includes all officers from the Community Safety Unit who are encouraged to raise DV Awareness on a daily basis.
75. The training package has been centrally organised by TP and rolled out to Borough's. It concentrates on the importance of tackling domestic violence generally and highlights specific areas for improvements in reporting and investigating. In particular the identification of an incident as domestic violence and the subsequent gathering of evidence using book 124d, witnesses, forensics and previous history. It also emphasises the positive arrest policy and explains the reasons for its use.
76. Domestic violence awareness training is delivered by a dedicated training unit consisting of Police Officers and support staff only. Further training is provided for community safety unit staff where outside agencies are invited to attend and provide an overview of their roles/responsibilities. This is usually conducted every 6 months due to the difficulties in arranging and organising. Speakers have included CPS, Domestic Violence Team, TP, local family law solicitors and victim support.
77. The domestic violence awareness training consists of one day locally delivered program. It deals with the background to domestic violence, cultural perspectives, arranged marriage and how this differs from forced marriage, support services available to victims, same sex domestic violence, honour based violence and female genital mutilation. There are currently no follow up packages although robust monitoring of daily crime ensures that the skills are correctly used and embedded in operational practice.
78. At the time of this report 85% of all staff at Tower Hamlets BOCU have been trained in domestic violence awareness. Senior management team made a policy decision to train officers/staff who are more likely to deal with domestic violence.

G. Employee Domestic Violence

79. The BOCU is confident in supporting police staff / police officers who may / or are experiencing domestic violence. The safety of the victim is paramount. Additional

barriers and pressures have to be borne in mind when considering safety measures. Accessibility to records and databases are restricted and sanitized to ensure confidentiality for the victim. Disclosure or information sharing is only conducted with the full knowledge and consent of the victim. There are opportunities for staff to seek early intervention where problems relating to partner or family relationships emerge and which cause concern. Colleagues will not act as mediators and as such, Occupational Health are able to provide advice and support in this capacity.

80. The BOCU is confident in the accountability of suspected perpetrators of domestic violence who are police staff / police officers. A Standard Operating Procedure outlines the procedure of such an occurrence and ensures compliance with service policy. The Borough CSU, where the offence was committed, will be responsible for the interview, investigation and case preparation. The Operational Commander of the Borough where the domestic violence incident occurred, and that of where the suspected officer/employee worked, will be informed. The DPS Borough Support will maintain responsibility for all suspension and restriction reviews throughout the investigation and will consult on these matters with individuals concerned.
81. Police Officers and Staff who are perpetrators of domestic violence will be prosecuted. The probability of charges in these cases are greater due to the public interest criteria weighting heavily in favour of charge where the evidential test is met and the perpetrator holds a position of trust.

H. Project Umbra

82. Tower Hamlets BOCU has engaged with Project Umbra through performance management framework for domestic violence. All CSU DI's are engaged in the project and kept abreast of developments through monthly DI's meetings with the central CSU Service Delivery Team. TP have requested that CSU Managers assist with this process by taking part in one of the six strands. Detective Inspector Kevin Baldwin has volunteered to assist with this project. Tower Hamlets BOCU is working locally to ensure engagement of the six strands.

Strand 1 - Improving performance and data sharing: The aim of this strand is to improve the performance of CJS agencies with a special emphasis on integrating systems across agencies. Tower Hamlets has improved performance through robust supervision and management of systems that ensure that, at all levels, there are procedures to check compliance with standard operating procedures

Strand 2 - Increasing advocacy and support services: The aim of this strand is to ensure that survivor safety remains central to Umbra and that improvements in the CJS are accompanied by concurrent improvements in survivor support. Tower Hamlets have introduced victim support scheme domestic violence advocates working alongside investigators to provide victims with immediate access to support services.

Strand 3 - Protecting children and young people exposed to domestic violence: The aim of this strand is to ensure that the needs of children exposed to domestic violence are fully integrated into the policy and practice of all key services used by victims. Supervision of all allegations ensures that MERLIN³ reports are completed where children are present and referred to police child protection teams and social services and in addition social services are a partner agency on the safety planning panel.

Strand 4 - Improving offender management: The aim of this strand is to improve the way DV offenders are identified and managed in terms of risk accountability and rehabilitation. Tower Hamlets are positively engaging with and supporting the safety planning panel by referring repeat offenders and high risk cases and sitting on the panel with partner agencies.

Strand 5 - Greater integration of legal systems and services: The aim of this strand is to ensure greater consistency and integration of policy, practice and administrative systems across the CJS. Tower Hamlets are working to the Crown Prosecution Service SLA to ensure that domestic violence cases are prioritized and afforded the appropriate consideration for case disposal.

Strand 6 - Section 9 domestic violence murder reviews: The aim of this strand is to improve the way DV murder reviews are conducted and to examine and implement lessons learnt from completed reviews. This is ongoing with work involving the violent crime action group.

1. Interface with the Met Modernisation Programme

³ "Missing Persons Enquiries and Related Linked Indices" (MERLIN) is a police networked computer system providing a database across London used to trace children and families where concerns have been registered. It holds all missing persons' reports within the Metropolitan Police Service and a national database of all persons missing for more than seven days. It covers children/young people coming to notice, youth non-recordable offences, prostitute cautions and children/young people taken into police protection.

83. The implementation of Integrated Borough Operations (IBO) has ensured that officers have access to fast time risk assessments when dealing with domestic violence. It is now common practice for officers attending Domestic Violence Incidents to be supplied a thorough risk assessment prior to attending. The rationale for this should be so to ensure that the victim's safety through informed decision making and the officers safety can be safeguarded so that they are aware of who resides in a property, dangers at the property, previous criminal history, previous allegations of crime, previous criminal intelligence, in addition to this when arriving at a decision to arrest this can be carried out with a full previous history of all parties. Officers on patrol provided with this information are best able to protect themselves and the victims of Domestic Violence. The IBO monitors this by use of a daily summary sheet, which forms part of the daily management meeting assessment.

J. Equality and Diversity Implications

84. Tower Hamlets continues to work towards eradicating unlawful discrimination and promote opportunity and community relations. The services we provide are for all but are offered and supplied according to the individual needs of the victim. We have built working practices based on providing assistance to different communities regardless of sex, colour, race, sexual orientation or belief. Domestic violence affects all communities and anyone who is affected should be confident that they will be able to access the support and advice they require and that Police will treat their case seriously. We are continually looking to improve and/or update our services.

85. Partnership work with Tower Hamlets Domestic Violence Team has enabled police to expand services to hard to reach groups. Tower Hamlets Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Forum is to reform in September of this year and police are currently recruiting a full time LGBT liaison officer. September 2006 will also see the establishment of an independent reporting site at the Royal London Hospital Accident and Emergency Department. This will make services available to all vulnerable groups at a time close to when the offence took place. Health visitors are being trained to identify cases of domestic violence and specifically where children may be at risk. Partnership work also involves information events that encourage third party reporting within faith communities as well as community centres.

86. The Tower Hamlets Domestic Violence Scrutiny Working Group report 'Don't wait for 35' of March 2006 found:

“The ethnic background of those reporting domestic violence largely mirrors the ethnic composition of the wider population of Tower Hamlets. There has been a significant improvement over the past four years of reporting from Asian victims rising from 23% to 35%. Before this, there had been significant under reporting of domestic violence from Asian victims”.

This improvement in reporting domestic violence is a demonstration of the investment made by the partnership group in reaching hard to communities. This experience could be extended to other sections of the community. Whilst there is domestic violence awareness work undertaken by Help the Aged and disability groups are represented at partnership forums is it an area for future development.

K. Financial implications

87. Tower Hamlets BOCU has supported the domestic violence strategy by ensuring that budgets are made available to tackle these crimes from within existing Police budgets. The CSU Detective Inspector manages Police overtime from within existing budgets. There is the option of bidding for additional funding through the Borough Tasking and Co-Ordination Group (BTCCG) weekly meeting. Additional funding has also been made available by the local authority team to support the introduction of victim support advocates.

Report author: Detective Inspector Kevin Baldwin

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