



Metropolitan Police Authority

Domestic Violence Board – 19 September 2006

BRENT BOROUGH RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Summary

This report is submitted to provide members of the MPA domestic violence board an insight into the work undertaken by Brent Borough Operational Command Unit (Brent BOCU) to tackle domestic violence.

The report will describe the work undertaken by Brent BOCU to tackle domestic violence by adopting a partnership problem solving approach seeking to improve performance in attaining sanctioned detections, keeping survivors safe and holding perpetrators to account.

Best practice and areas of innovation will be highlighted and the challenges addressed described.

A. BOCU PROFILE – AVAILABLE DATA

1. Brent BOCU recognises the prevalence of domestic violence and the serious impact these incidents have on victims and their families; Brent BOCU has adopted a robust strategy to tackle domestic violence.
2. Brent BOCU responds positively to “any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults (18 or over) who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.
3. This includes issues of concern to black and minority ethnic communities such as ‘honour’ related violence.
4. Brent BOCU has acknowledged the increasing number of young women aged between 16 and 18 years old who fall outside the ACPO definition of domestic violence by way of age and has responded by developing a BOCU policy to assist these vulnerable victims by affording them the ‘status’ of DV victims which allows them access to the full range of support services within Brent Borough.
5. Brent BOCU use the MPS domestic violence Standard Operating Procedure (SOP); using the MPS core values and Brent BOCU policing plan to strengthen and underpin the aims, strategies and actions undertaken to tackle domestic violence on Brent Borough.

6. All incidents of domestic violence are managed using two strategies –
 - ‘Keeping survivors safe’ - the response of Brent BOCU is focused on the premise of informed risk assessment and safety planning to ensure the safety of victims and their families.
 - ‘Holding offenders to account’ – if a substantive criminal offence is alleged every effort is made to bring the offender to justice by way of sanctioned detection.
7. Data provided by the MPS Performance Directorate -
 - Between 1 June 2005 and 31 May 2006 4051 domestic violence incidents were reported on Brent BOCU, of which 1951 were substantive criminal offences.
 - A sanctioned detection rate of 25.9% was achieved with a total domestic violence detection rate of 60.1%.
 - A total of 2350 victims reported incidents of domestic violence, 209 were repeat victims which equates to 9% of domestic violence victims being offended against more than once with an average number of offences per repeat victim of 2.3.
 - 12 survivors of domestic violence were identified as suffering from mental health issues.
 - There was 1 domestic violence homicide in the last 12 months, a homicide review has been completed and its findings will be discussed later in the report.
 - Currently Brent BOCU has achieved a sanctioned detection rate of 28% for domestic violence offences for the 1st quarter of the 2006 to 2007 performance year.
 - Substantial improvements have been gained year on year due to Brent BOCU’s commitment to achieving results. In the years 2002 – 2003 an 11% sanction detection rate was achieved, 2003 – 2004 a 16% sanctioned detections rate was achieved and 2004 – 2005 a 24 % sanctioned detection rate was achieved.
 - Brent BOCU focuses attention on quality of service. If a victim alleges an offence aggravated by domestic violence to police, success is measured by achieving a sanctioned detection, as a quantifiable result, which holds the offender to account for their actions. Brent BOCU consistently strives to improve performance, in the most recent assessment of MPS BOCU performance Brent CSU was the 3rd best performing BOCU for domestic violence and race hate crime.

B. POLICY COMPLIANCE, IMPLEMENTATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

8. Brent BOCU recognise the need to implement a robust policy for the police response to domestic violence to ensure that victims are protected and offenders are brought to justice.

9. There is a robust system in place to ensure there is no discrepancy between the number of domestic violence incidents that the BOCU has responded to, and the number of domestic violence incidents that are subsequently 'flagged' as such on CRIS (Crime Reporting Information System). Prior to a computer aided despatch (CAD) message being shown as complete a CRIS number must be entered or an entry made by an Inspector explaining in detail why the matter is not a domestic incident. The Integrated Borough Operations (IBO) Controller has responsibility for ensuring that domestic violence incidents are completed in line with MPS policy. The Crime Management Unit (CMU) Detective Inspector is responsible for ensuring compliance with National Crime Reporting Standards (NCRS).
10. To ensure a professional and appropriate response is provided by the Initial Investigating Officer each CRIS report is supervised by a Team Sergeant. This ensures that standard operating procedures are complied with and the report is correctly flagged, at the earliest opportunity, to allow any additional action to be taken immediately. With the introduction of the 124d system the Team Sergeant is also responsible for ensuring that the risk assessment and safety plan applied is correct. Team Sergeants are actively encouraged to attend domestic violence incidents to provide effective supervision at the scene.
11. A 124d form is completed at every domestic violence incident. The 124d system has been found to be an effective tool for the collection of information at crime scenes by Response Team officers. The Initial Investigating Officer is also required to complete a risk assessment, using the SPECSS+ model, and safety plan at the scene to ensure that the victim is safe.¹
12. It is a requirement that whilst at the scene of all domestic violence incidents on Brent BOCU that the Initial Investigating Officer must contact the CSU on a dedicated phone to gain expert advice and guidance. This policy has seen the quality of 'at-scene' risk assessments and positive action by way of suspect arrest increase.
13. The initial police response has been strengthened by the introduction of a Domestic Violence Enforcement Campaign (DVEC) car, which was initially funded by the Policing Standards Unit of the Home Office and has now been integrated into Brent BOCU policing plan for domestic violence. The DVEC car is staffed by a CSU officer and attends the scene of all domestic violence incidents to ensure that all possible evidence is collected from the victim, witnesses and scene. To improve the quality of service and therefore the number of sanctioned detections granted, the quality and quantity of evidence recovered by police needed to improve. Since the deployment of the DVEC car the sanctioned detection rate achieved has increased.
14. Every CRIS flagged as a domestic incident is allocated to Brent Community Safety Unit (CSU) by Brent CMU which acts as a quality assurance filter; each report is then subject to secondary supervision by a CSU Detective Sergeant to ensure compliance with minimum reporting standards and SOPs.

¹ High risk factors that may be present are identified using the SPECSS risk assessment model – **S**eparation (child contact), **P**regnancy / New Birth, **E**scalation (attacks becoming worse and happening more often), **C**ultural issues and sensitivity, **S**talking and **S**exual assault.

15. A CSU Detective Sergeant enters a secondary investigation strategy on each domestic violence CRIS report. A specialist investigator is then allocated the investigation. Each incident is reviewed to ensure accurate risk assessments have been completed and that all lines of enquiry are undertaken to bring offenders to justice. Officers are tasked to proactively tackle areas of risk to victim's safety; the preferred option will primarily be the removal of the offender by way of arrest and sanction.
16. Brent Sapphire Unit investigates domestic violence rape and serious sexual offences while Brent CSU provides expert knowledge and skills to ensure correct risk assessment and support is offered to the victim and their family. The area Child Protection Team deals with child abuse cases, with support from Brent CSU. In all cases the primary aim of the investigation will always be the safety of the victim and their family. The MERLIN² system is used to record all incidents of children coming to notice of police, in particular when children are present at venues where a domestic incident has occurred, to ensure that Brent Children's Services has a clear and accurate record of the child's association to issues of risk.
17. There has been one domestic violence homicide on Brent BOCU within the last 12 months; the victim was an elderly male who was attacked by his son who had suffered a rapid mental health breakdown. A homicide review was undertaken and co-chaired by the Brent DV coordinator and the Brent CSU Detective Inspector (DI). The review involved all statutory partners within the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) and voluntary sector agencies. The circumstances of the homicide and previous history revealed that the victim or suspect had not engaged with any statutory or voluntary agency in the last five years and no opportunities for intervention were identified. In conclusion the review recommended that domestic violence services and those generally provided by CDRP members should be more widely advertised and in particular isolated communities should be engaged. Brent BOCU has strived to comply with recommendations made during the review, which were -
 - The local PCT should engage with corporate HR departments across the Borough recommending procedures to be followed in the event that an employee displays mental illness.
 - The production of a leaflet or other publicity media highlighting services available to families experiencing issues of mental health and / or DV is being developed.
 - Promotion of the gender-neutral and Black / Ethnic Minority facilities of Brent DVAP.
 - Formalized strategic links between DV and Protection Of Vulnerable Adults board.

² "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.

- Provision of DV awareness training to community and voluntary sector groups.
- Implementation of DV MARAC. To include reviews by all agencies of current high-risk domestic violence cases.
- Domestic violence awareness training to be mainstreamed into Mental Health providers curricula.
- Continue raising awareness about the importance of co-ordinated 'multi-agency' responses to domestic violence (prevention, intervention and engaging strategies).
- Future reviews involving child and adult victims should be dealt with as one review, preferably under a statutory requirement with voluntary agencies invited to partake.
- Formalise information sharing across the sector by ensuring that relevant agencies are invited to sign up to the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership Information Sharing Protocol.
- Where appropriate Probation to ensure that known domestic violence perpetrators are referred to a domestic violence perpetrator programme (affiliated with RESPECT minimum guidelines) as part of their sentencing plan/ bail conditions.
- Temporary housing policy to include a risk assessment for victims fleeing violence of the proposed placement, taking into consideration any connection between the victim and other residents, victims vulnerability and proximity to perpetrator.
- Brent housing service level agreements must include that all support staff are trained in Dangerous Families Protocol, Child Protection and Domestic Violence Awareness training.

C. RESOURCES

18. Brent BOCU acknowledges the importance of staffing the CSU with appropriately skilled officers and support staff to ensure the highest level of service is provided to the community of Brent Borough. There are no substantive Detective Constables (DC's) attached to Brent CSU at present, this is reflective of the small number of substantive DC's on Brent BOCU and not a policy decision. The role is currently filled by Trainee Detective Constables developing towards the substantive rank; this has not negatively affected the performance of the CSU.
19. The current posts within the CSU are –
 - 1 Detective Inspector
 - 3 Detective Sergeants
 - 17 Constables – consisting of Detective and Police Constables
 - 1 Office Manager / Multi Agency Risk Assessment Coordinator (MARAC)
20. There is an ongoing review of staff resources assigned to CSU's across the MPS managed by the Racial and Violent Crime Task Force (RVCTF). Whilst it is acknowledged that an increase in staff would assist the performance of

the unit this must be balanced with the needs of the other 13 CID units on Brent BOCU. Brent BOCU Senior Management Team (SMT) undertakes regular reviews of staffing levels within all CID units to ensure staff are deployed appropriately. This has resulted in Brent SMT raising the total number of staff on Brent CSU from 17 to 19 in 2005 and again in 2006 to 21 staff. This demonstrates Brent BOCUs commitment to providing the community of Brent with a premium service.

21. The demographic profile of CSU staff is –
 - 1 Male Detective Inspector
 - 3 Male Detective Sergeants
 - 8 Male Trainee Detective Constables
 - 2 Female Trainee Detective Constables
 - 5 Male Police Constables
 - 2 Female Police Constables
 - 1 Male MARAC Coordinator
22. There is currently one vacancy within the CSU for a Constable, this has been recently advertised internally on Brent BOCU and the recruitment process is ongoing externally. Brent BOCU currently employs 660 police officers, 27 officers below the full BOCU complement of police officers.
23. CSU officers receive specialist training at the Crime Academy with one day courses being provided for officers on temporary attachment and one week courses for officers on permanent postings to the unit. Officers on the Trainee Detective Constable programme currently attend a five-week investigators course and a two-week investigators interview course.
24. To ensure that CSU officers have a thorough understanding of the diverse needs of domestic violence victims the CSU has engaged with partners within both the statutory and voluntary sectors to provide training to its officers. Examples of training undertaken include involvement in the Domestic Violence Forum Practice Development days and involvement of voluntary sector workers in CSU training sessions.
25. All Brent BOCU police officers attended a 1-day DV seminar in 2005, which highlighted the needs of domestic violence victims. Including a presentation on Force Marriage and Honour crimes, which emphasised the specific risks and needs of victims of this crime type.
26. MPS and Brent BOCU policy is to treat everyone as an individual and provide an appropriate level of service, however it is recognised that CSU officers require enhanced diversity training to ensure the highest level of support is provided to victims and their families at the earliest opportunity.
27. Brent BOCU police is a member of the Brent DV multi agency action plan and the CSU Detective Inspector attends the local Domestic Violence forum; both arenas allow Brent BOCU to obtain expert advice and best practice for managing diversity issues.

28. An office manager has recently been appointed to undertake administrative support for the CSU to ensure police officers are engaged in the core role of crime investigation. This role has been expanded to incorporate the role of MARAC coordinator and will be explained in the Partnership section.
29. Detective Superintendent Neil Wilson is the SMT strategic champion for domestic violence. As the SMT champion for domestic violence DS Wilson has raised the profile of domestic violence both within Brent BOCU and with the statutory partners of the CDRP. DS Wilson has sponsored, and chaired, the introduction of a domestic violence Operations Forum, which has pulled together all partners to ensure a joint strategy for domestic violence. This in turn has led to the publishing of a domestic violence action plan for Brent BOCU.
30. The Brent Domestic Violence Operational Forum has responsibility for the implementation of the Brent DV multi agency action plan. The group has representation from all partners who have a strategic role and all representatives are at an appropriate level commensurate with policy decision-making. Member agencies include-
 - Brent BOCU
 - Witness Care Unit
 - Brent DV Co-ordinator
 - Local Authority Community Safety Team
 - Brent DV Forum Chair/Vice Chair
 - Crown Prosecution Service
 - HM Court Services
 - Brent Domestic Violence Advocacy Project
 - MARAC Co-ordinator
 - Specialist Voluntary Sector (including BME groups)
 - Victim Support/ Witness Service
 - Housing
 - Probation Services
 - Voluntary Perpetrator programme
 - Families without Fear
 - Children's Services
31. Brent BOCU has fully engaged with the Brent DV multi agency action plan through active participation in the DV operations forum. The action plan has been agreed by all parties, who are working together to achieve the following objectives –
 - Multi agency protocols to ensure efficient effective information sharing, risk assessment, referral protocol, personnel policy, multi agency monitoring and data collection.
 - Multi agency risk assessment conferences.
 - Identification of DV cases. To ensure tracking and management of DV cases by all agencies.
 - Independent accredited support for victims and children. To co-ordinate the response to victims of DV across all agencies.

- Trained and dedicated staff in all agencies responding to DV.
 - Specialist DV court. To provide a co-ordinated criminal justice system response to DV offenders and enhance provisions to victims of DV attending court.
 - Equality & Diversity issues. To provide specialised services to the diverse community of Brent.
 - Increased publicity for DV issues. Promote a clear message of intolerance of DV and access to support services.
 - Perpetrator programme. To reduce the opportunity to re-offend and hold perpetrators to account.
 - Enhanced investigation of DV. Using positive action to bring perpetrators to justice, removing the onus on victims to gain successful prosecutions. Holding perpetrators to account at the earliest opportunity to reduce repeat victimisation.
 - Safer Housing for victims. Coordinated 'risk focused' management of housing issues to ensure a safe home environment for victims of DV.
32. Councillor Lincoln Beswick championed domestic violence issues at the highest local authority level but due to a change of leadership, he no longer undertakes this role and a new domestic violence lead is to be appointed.
 33. The Brent Council DV Coordinator, Helen Oliver, is the central champion for domestic violence within the CDRP. Ms Oliver has been instrumental in the development of the domestic violence strategy for Brent Borough.
 34. Detective Inspector Pete Wallis was the operational domestic violence champion for Brent BOCU, he has recently been moved to a new post for career development. DI Wallis had responsibility for staff compliance and implementation of SOPs, representation of Brent BOCU at local forums, design of BOCU domestic violence policing plan and performance management. DI Ian Lott has now been posted to the CSU, a hand over period was implemented to ensure CSU performance was not affected.
 35. The work undertaken by CSU staff is generally held with high regard by other Brent BOCU officers. It is a challenging role, which has been recognised by the BOCU SMT and centrally by the RVCTF, resulting in DI Wallis receiving a Chief Superintendents Commendation for work within the field of forced marriage.
 36. Domestic Violence incidents and application of the positive action policy are monitored during the SMT daily management meeting through the Duty Officers report. Brent BOCU SMT actively enforces compliance with MPS and BOCU policy.
 37. Brent BOCU recognised the need to improve the quality of evidence captured at the scene of domestic violence incidents, in particular the need to be able to present visual evidence quickly. To address this issue 4 digital camera systems have been purchased with funding sourced from the Government Office for London (GoL), the systems include a high quality digital single lens reflex (SLR) camera, laptop computer and printer. Crime Scene Investigators

(CSI) and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) have approved the Standard Operating Procedure. The main aims of the system are to capture visually injuries and scenes of crime. The lap top computers allow the images to be used immediately for disclosure to solicitors, suspect interviews, CPS charge authorities and Court presentation. This is an innovative system, which has achieved increased sanctioned detections. The camera systems are deployed in the DVEC car, with a specialist CSU investigator. Also carried in the car are Early Evidence Kits to collect forensic evidence. CSI's now regularly attending scenes of domestic violence to secure complex forensic evidence of offences.

38. Further funding has been awarded by GoL to allow the BOCU to purchase 2 'Head Cam' systems, which will be worn by officers attending scenes of domestic violence with the aim of recording real time images of injuries, scenes of crime and peoples behaviour. The systems has been used to great effect in Plymouth, achieving increased guilty pleas at court due to the high quality of evidence collected.
39. By providing high quality equipment and training to officers engaged in the investigation of domestic violence, Brent BOCU recognises the importance of the role and supports them to achieve the demanding results required.
40. The CSU DI monitors the performance of Brent CSU on a weekly basis. DS Wilson chairs a monthly BOCU performance meeting and RVCTF centrally monitors the MPS performance with trends and patterns identified and these are addressed during the MPS CSU DIs meetings. Brent BOCU acknowledges the importance of performance management to ensure that the community of Brent is given a quantifiable result. Victims are engaged with at the earliest opportunity and the aims of Brent BOCU explained, that of ensuring their safety and bringing offenders to justice. It is also clearly stated that assistance will be provided even if a prosecution is not supported.

D. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIPS (CDRP)

41. Brent CDRP's Overall budget is in excess of £900,000.
42. Brent BOCU has made a £91,500 contribution towards Brent DV advocacy project (DVAP) and £22,000 for the MARAC Co-ordinator post. In addition local statutory CDRP partners have contributed a total of £240,500 (45k DAAT/PCT; 17k London Borough of Brent (LBB) Housing; 30k LBB Community Safety Team (CST); 46k Local Area Agreement (LAA); 65K Children and Families; 38k NRF). The CDRP has also levered £20k from the central TVCP budget for domestic violence initiatives. In addition, our voluntary sector partners are in the process of developing an ambitious bid for Henry Smith Charity / City Parochial Foundation July 2006 funding to support the existing multi agency work in the borough of which Brent BOCU plays a key role. This proposal includes the establishment of a Health Based DV Advocate, Work supervision for Advocates, Peer support group for survivors, and an Independent DV Advocate for the local magistrates court.

43. The CDRP has set the following Domestic Violence Operational Outcomes for 2006-2009. To further develop our co-ordinated community response to domestic violence combining both the criminal justice system and non-criminal justice interventions forming a multi agency response that creates greater victim safety and brings perpetrators to account. Our Partnership outcomes will be achieved through enhancing –
- Multi agency risk management of perpetrators and victims
 - Investigation
 - Support for victims and their children
 - Increasing the proportion of domestic violence crimes that are successfully brought to justice through charge and prosecution at court
 - The data collected will provide tangible evidence of progress towards narrowing the justice gap.
44. The outcomes will be measured through the creation of a Local Area Agreement, which will measure progress in the following way -
- Proportion of incidents recorded where a suspect is present and an arrest is made for an incident recorded as DV related: increase the proportion of incidents recorded where a suspect is present and an arrest is made for an incident recorded as DV related from 31.2% to 51.2% by 2008/09.
 - Proportion of domestic violence incidents, which result in a sanction detection (crimes for which someone is charged, summonsed, receives a caution or other formal sanction – including a fixed penalty notice): increase the proportion of domestic violence incidents, which result in a sanction detection, from 24% to 30% by March 2007. By 2008/09, an increase in the proportion of domestic violence incidents which result in sanction detections to a very challenging 37.4%.
 - Proportion of cases that reach court where the case is dropped at court due to no evidence being offered, the judge directing or ordering an acquittal or a decision to discontinue: establish a baseline to measure the proportion of cases that reach court, where the case is dropped at court, by March 2007.
45. CDRP DV projects in progress –
- Expansion of the DVAP in April 2006. Partnership between DVAP, Brent Women’s Aid and Asian Women’s Resource centre for delivery of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Outreach funded through LBB Children’s Fund
 - Brent DV MARAC: The co-ordinator has been appointed and we are developing procedures currently with a view to holding the first operational meeting in August 2006
 - Sanctuary Scheme: is a multi agency project aimed at improving victims housing choice through the provision of security improvements to their

property alongside advocacy support. We have recently evaluated this project and produced publicity to increase awareness

- Brent Specialist Domestic Violence Cluster Court; the borough was recently selected for Assessment following a successful bid for a Brent Specialist DV Court. The Assessment took place on the 29th June 2006 and we expect to hear the outcome in September 2006
 - ‘Back-2-Work’ scheme for victims with no recourse to public funds: A significant number of victims are obstructed by their lack of recourse to public funds. Brent has therefore developed a scheme whereby individuals can access work with accommodation so that they can remove themselves from the abusive situation
 - Westminster Prevention Work in Schools: the CDRP has supported the development of a pool of trainers who are rolling out a programme of domestic violence prevention work in school settings
46. Alongside DVAP, the CDRP prevention strategy in the borough is complex. Our multi-layered approach means that we are working directly with Brent Children in Schools through the continued roll out of the Westminster DV Schools Pack. In addition we have developed stronger links through the DV Operational Forum across agencies including-
- Links with Sexual Assault Referral Clinic at Northwick Park Hospital
 - Links with Protection Of Vulnerable Adults
 - Links with Local Safeguarding Children’s Board
 - Back 2 Work Scheme for women with no recourse to public funds
 - Cross sector work with London Borough of Brent (LBB) Private Fostering Team
 - Cross sector work with the LBB Adult Protection department
 - Cross sector work with LBB Unaccompanied Minors Team
 - Cross sector work with LBB Births Deaths and Marriages Registry
47. Brent CDRP has sought to publicise its actions to tackle domestic violence by:
- Dissemination of DV Publicity across borough agencies
 - Production of DV Publicity including Sanctuary leaflet, Advocacy leaflet, crisis cards, poster, Personal Safety Leaflet, Young Persons Leaflet
 - Launch of Brent Borough DV Strategy
 - International Women’s Day Celebration
 - Pipeline publicity
 - DV Forum leaflet
 - Renew Directory of Services
 - DV Forum Induction pack
 - Brent DVAP Bus campaign

48. Brent DVAP is independent from Brent BOCU but its co-location and its participation within the steering board means that there is significant consultation and engagement -
- Service user consultation and establishment of service user group for the local DV Forum
 - Development of Service User Training Video by the local DV Forum
 - Improved BME Community Cohesion through targeted Practice Development Seminars, funded by the CDRP

E. PARTNERSHIP WORKING

49. Brent BOCU has placed a strong emphasis on partnership problem solving to tackle domestic violence. This has led to the development of a multi agency domestic violence action plan devised and owned by the DV operations forum chaired by DS Wilson. The main theme of the action plan is to create a coordinated response to domestic violence whilst ensuring that all parties have defined roles and responsibilities.
50. The BOCU response forms part of the borough-wide co-ordinated community response presently promoted by the Home Office. This response places emphasis upon the importance of co-ordinating multi agency interventions, both inside and outside the criminal justice system, in order to create greater victim safety, which in turn enables us to hold more perpetrators to account.
51. It is recognised that CSU staff were undertaking many different roles, in addition to the investigation of crime. This negatively affected the officer's ability to perform their core role. Brent BOCU has sought to promote the core functions of police officers whilst identifying key partners to progress victim support from both statutory and voluntary sectors.
52. We recognise that BOCU's investigative remit is only one component of the holistic solution for victims and their families. While we are not complacent about our response, we do feel that we are sometimes reliant upon other agencies to deliver a holistic wrap around response. For example, victims are more likely to withdraw their statements if they face uncertainty around practical issues such as homelessness, child protection, immigration and access to benefits. Historically, such issues have been dealt with in isolation by other agencies with little or no co-ordination with us. Recognising this stalemate we have worked robustly with our other statutory and voluntary sector partners to establish an operational strategic group- known as the Brent DV Operational Forum - which allows us to address such issues in partnership.
53. Our commitment to partnership work has resulted in extensive benefits for our service delivery. In particular, as the lead agency funding the establishment of the Borough's independent Domestic Violence Advocacy Project (Brent DVAP) we were able to secure agreement for its co-location within Kilburn station. In turn, this has enabled us to free up resources and redefine our priorities as investigators; in addition BOCU have had a principal role in the development of a proposal for a Brent Specialist Domestic

Violence Court which will transform our shared response to witnesses accessing the criminal justice system; In addition our leadership of the boroughs multi-agency strategic 'Domestic Violence Operational Forum'" has led to widespread improvements in service delivery across agencies.

54. Brent BOCU has worked closely with the DV coordinator to develop its domestic violence policing strategy to reflect the home office model for best practice. This has involved the development of a MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferencing) system³, which is now being implemented on the BOCU. Several trials have been held which have successfully addressed domestic violence issues by designing multi agency strategies to both support victims and target offenders. A full MARAC system will be in place on Brent BOCU by September 2006 running in tandem with the local Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). Brent MARAC system is modelled on the Home Office Specialist DV Court manual and is designed to be victim centred.
55. Brent BOCU recognise that it is essential to share, collate and analyse all information held by partner agencies to ensure that an informed risk assessment is completed and an appropriate multi agency action plan is designed to protect victims and bring offenders to justice.
56. Brent BOCU, in partnership with Brent Council Community Safety Team (CST) designed, funded and implemented the Brent DVAP, which is co-located with Brent CSU. Brent DVAP is primarily a crisis intervention service working to coordinate Brent's response to victims and their families. Secondly DVAP will advocate on behalf of the victim and refer them directly to suitable longer-term services.
57. Brent DVAP designs risk assessed safety and intervention plans for victims to empower them to move on with their lives. Brent BOCU now uses Brent DVAP as the central point of referral to both statutory and voluntary agencies. It is an extremely efficient and professional service offering advocacy work for adults, children, and substance users and is looking to develop a post for victims of sexual offences. Brent DVAP has a service user evaluation process that all clients engage in at the start and end of contact, which will be analysed to identify issues and can be addressed by Brent BOCU.
58. Brent DVAP employs a risk assessment package, which incorporates protocols from MARAC, Cardiff Women's Safety Unit and SPECCS. There is a confidentiality agreement between Brent DVAP and Brent BOCU ensuring that people at immediate risk of serious harm are disclosed to police at the earliest opportunity. Brent DVAP's risk assessment works in tandem with the police system of DV risk assessment and has proved successful in identifying vulnerable victims who have been provided with enhanced support.

³ The Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferencing (MARAC) system is a multi-agency approach involving a formal conference to facilitate the risk assessment process. The purpose is for agencies to share information with a view to identifying those persons at a 'very high' level of risk and thereafter to jointly construct a management plan to provide professional support to those at 'high risk'. Risk assessment and the sharing of information across the relevant agencies enables limited resources to be targeted.

59. Advocates employed by Brent DVAP are required to complete certified training provided by the Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA) to ensure a professional service is provided. Presently all 5 DVAP advocates are undertaking the training.
60. Brent BOCU is represented on Brent DV forum, which is a group of practitioners, statutory and voluntary agencies and this arena allows candid feedback to be given to all parties. Brent BOCU has been the driving force behind the development of a formalised strategy to tackle domestic violence in a coordinated manner, this has caused some tension between the partners as some agencies have felt undermined by the rapid development of projects such as Brent DVAP. It is recognised by Brent BOCU that all parties have previously played a valuable role in supporting victims and is now seeking to engage with all partners to ensure that all parties fully understand the roles undertaken by individual agencies and what the aims, strategies and tactics of Brent Borough are to tackle domestic violence. It is hoped that by engaging with all parties, an active and empowered role can be undertaken by all, working in a coordinated and informed manner.

F. TRAINING

61. Brent BOCU has completed the MPS training package for domestic violence. The education of frontline staff is recognised as a key factor in ensuring the protection of victims and bringing offenders to justice.
62. During 2004 and 2005, domestic violence and 124d training was undertaken for all officers from PC to Inspector and was presented by Brent BOCU Training and Development Unit. The CSU DI attended each training day to champion the introduction of the 124d system of reporting domestic violence and risk assessment. A representative from Brent Women's Aid attended each training day and provided service user insights. The training day was an 8-hour input that included presentations from guest speakers, completion of 124d form, risk assessment & safety planning and forced marriage & community issues. The training reached 85% of front line staff, the remaining 15% will be trained during update sessions throughout the next 12 months.
63. Brent BOCUs SMT is committed to tackling DV. All senior managers have received training on DV issues and attended the 1-day DV seminars held across 2005. DS Wilson, Brent BOCU crime manager, has personal responsibility for performance in DV issues and is briefed directly by the CSU DI and Intelligence Unit on emerging issues.
64. CSU supervisors provide update training for Response Teams and provide initial training for staff joining the BOCU from Hendon Training School.
65. Brent Training & Development Unit has been tasked to provide refresher training to all front line staff on domestic violence and to introduce the wider topic of Race Hate crime linking both areas with regard to standards of initial reporting and interventions to prevent reoffending. This will be completed within the next 12 months.
66. Officers attached to the CSU are sent on a 1 week enhanced CSU course at the Crime Academy during which they are taught risk assessment skills and

safety planning. As previously stated, police officers are now being tasked to concentrate on criminal investigation and Brent CSU are tasking partner agencies to provide crisis intervention and long-term support to victims and their families.

G. EMPLOYEE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

67. Brent BOCU understands that domestic violence affects all areas of society and is often a hidden crime. A robust approach has been taken when dealing with employees who commit offences aggravated by domestic violence. It is also acknowledged that statistics show that due the large number staff employed by Brent BOCU, it is probable that some staff may be victims of domestic violence. The support and help available to victims is widely advertised at all sites on Brent BOCU and on the internal 'intranet' system.
68. The Brent BOCU Human Resources (HR) unit manager leads on the internal MPS domestic violence policy. This is to ensure that the welfare needs of officers are appropriately addressed through internal Occupational Health and confidential referral to outside support agencies. At the time of writing no officers within Brent BOCU have disclosed being a victim of domestic violence.
69. A robust response has been provided to Brent BOCU staff engaged in committing offences aggravated by domestic violence. During the past 12 months three members of police staff have been accused of domestic violence. The cases have been investigated by the CSU DI, and reviewed by Westminster BOCU CSU to ensure independence and transparency of decision-making. Each case was subject to the MPS domestic violence policy of positive action. Response team officers arrested all three members of staff at the scenes of crime.
 - One member of staff was charged, remanded in custody and found guilty at trial of making threats to kill, false imprisonment and assault, he has been dismissed from the MPS
 - One staff member was charged with assault and suspended from duty. He awaits discipline proceedings
 - The third staff member received an adult caution for assault and has been suspended from duty awaiting a discipline board were Brent SMT have recommended that he be dismissed
70. The suspects have then been managed through the internal discipline procedure by the Higher Executive Officer (HEO) in charge of Brent and Belgravia BOCU HR. All 3 victims of these offences have been referred onto Brent DVAP to ensure that they are provided with enhanced advocacy support.
71. To publicise the internal policy for domestic violence, a series of posters were circulated to all sites within Brent BOCU by RVCTF. These were clearly displayed to ensure the information was disseminated to all staff members.

H. PROJECT UMBRA

72. Brent BOCU has engaged with Project Umbra through performance management framework for domestic violence. All CSU DI's are engaged in the project and developments through the monthly DI's meetings with the central CSU delivery team. Brent BOCU has successfully managed 2 Murder Reviews and will fully engage with the new Domestic Homicide Review strand when it becomes operational.
73. Brent BOCU engages with all five operational strands of the project at a local level. Brent BOCU has in particular worked towards the following strands –
- 'Increasing advocacy and support' strand - funding, designing, managing & co-locating with Brent DVAP
 - 'Perpetrator management' strand - developing a local MARAC project
 - 'Integrated laws and courts' strand - by working towards a Specialist Domestic Violence Court through the local DV Operations Forum

I. INTERFACE WITH THE MET MODERNISATION PROGRAMME

74. The MPS response to domestic violence could be improved through the Met Modernisation Programme by increasing the quality of Risk Assessments. The quality could be dramatically improved by enhancing the access to information for Response Team officers attending the scenes of domestic violence incidents. The validity of Officers decisions can be improved by allowing access in a timely fashion to information regarding perpetrator history, previous allegations and intelligence systems which would allow for robust decision making with regard to arrest decisions, risk assessments and safety plans. Response team officers with accurate up to date information are best placed to protect victims, their families and the community from perpetrators of domestic violence.

J. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

75. Brent BOCU works continually to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and good community relations. The BOCU strives towards ensuring that equal treatment and access to services is not regarded as an issue for any person that it deals with. This is particularly considered in dealing with survivors of domestic violence irrespective of gender, colour, race, sexual orientation or belief. There are no proposals in this report likely to affect any group or section of the community we serve adversely. We attempt to provide an individual delivery of quality of service to all members of the community whilst giving all due considerations to diversity. Domestic violence affects all members of society regardless of background. Every victim of domestic violence is treated as an individual and his or her needs are met on this basis.

K. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

76. In addition to the funding detailed above, Brent BOCU spends approximately £1.5 million staffing the Community Safety Unit. Brent BOCU is fully committed to providing a professional service to victims of domestic violence which is fit for purpose and continues to reviews its policies, performance and strategies to ensure the best service is provided.

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