

Working together to tackle domestic violence

Standards for managing domestic violence cases will be driven up across London as part of a new multi-agency strategy from the London Criminal Justice Board (CJB).

The multi-pronged strategy aims to ensure there are effective and consistent standards being used by criminal justice agencies across the capital for supporting victims of domestic violence.

The London CJB will achieve this by working with Local Criminal Justice Groups (LCJGs) across the capital to mainstream the eight minimum standards of the Specialist Domestic Violence Court (SDVC) model that relate to criminal justice agencies.

In practice, this approach means that domestic violence cases will be managed by criminal justice agencies by processes and practices to nationally recognised standards that have been successful in:

- bringing more perpetrators to justice
- improving the support, safety and satisfaction of victims
- increasing public confidence in the CJS.

Our multi-agency strategy will also support the expansion the SDVC Programme in London – there are currently three accredited SDVCs in operation and areas are currently able to seek full accreditation (see 'Further Information' below).

The London CJB has consulted with key stakeholders on the strategy, which recognises that there is some excellent provision around domestic violence in some London boroughs. However, provision needs to be improved across London so that best practice is not limited to specific geographic areas.

An example of this best practice is ensuring that all CJS agencies use a common definition of domestic violence. This will bring about consistency in the cases that are identified and flagged on the respective systems of each of the CJS agencies. It will also be linked to a performance management framework underpinning this strategy.

The work we have carried out so far, tells us that achieving a minimum standard around the CJS components could be done at relatively low cost and in a way that integrates it with other activity.

In addition to ensuring that the practices and processes in place are delivering on justice, safety and confidence, we will also plan to develop a performance framework that will enable LCJGs and the London CJB to obtain some useful knowledge beyond just 'targets'. For instance, identifying trends and highlighting areas of best practice as well as areas for improvement.

We will be working closely with partners from the Government Office for London, the Greater London Authority, the Metropolitan Police Service, Her Majesty's Courts service, London Probation and the Crown Prosecution Service on the implementation of this strategy.

Andrew Morley, Chief Executive of the London CJB, said: "We are aware that while we will continue to influence and engage our partners such as local authorities in developing a coordinated

community response to domestic violence, our focus should be on ensuring we reach minimum standards around the components for which the CJS is responsible.”

Further information:

Expansion of the SDVC programme 2008-2009:

The National SDVC Steering Group will be managing the SDVC Programme and they are now seeking to select additional SDVCs in line with the Tackling Violence Crime Action Plan to bring the total number to 128 by 2011.

For those areas that wish to seek accreditation, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) recently circulated a self-assessment form. This should be completed and submitted by January 16, 2009 directly to the MoJ. Contact details are on the application form.

For further information on the issues discussed in this briefing please contact London CJB Communications Manager Christian Taylor by phoning: 0207 796 8532 or by email: Christian.Taylor@cps.gsi.gov.uk