

Nottingham and UK developments in Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse: Sept 2012

Services, Initiatives, Needs Assessments, Best Practice, Policy and Strategy

1. Introduction

The key milestones in the development of specialist services and best practice in Nottingham have progressed alongside national developments. However Nottingham has also at times developed ahead of national improvements in provision and practice.

The evolution in the recognition of the impact of domestic and sexual violence on individuals, communities and services and changes in practice has accelerated at particular moments in the last 40 years, coinciding with changes at national or local level in government, policy or legislation.

The feminist movement has ensured that domestic and sexual violence remains on the agenda. Initially in the form of organisations such as Womens Aid and Rape Crisis and more recently with Respect (the national agency for work with male perpetrators and victims) and CAADA (Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse, the national agency commissioned by the Home Office to co-ordinate the MARAC inspection programme) who have lobbied locally and nationally for provision and changes in statutory practice and legislation.

Academics providing evidence to identify issues and support change include Kelly, Mullender, Hague, Malos, Radford, Hester, Thiari, Dobash and Dobash and universities Bristol, Warwick, North London and Newcastle. The British Crime Survey and Professor Stanko have also undertaken large pieces of research to provide local and national agencies with data to corroborate the front line experience of smaller organisations and to encourage the development of policy.

Since 1999 local and national government have committed to partnerships and inter-ministerial action against domestic violence, utilising evidence based practice in co-operation with local domestic and sexual violence specialists to progress developments more rapidly.

2. Nottingham

The Womens Aid advice line and the first refuges and opened in Nottingham in the 1970's. Rape Crisis and the first refuges for Black women opened in the 1980's and in 1989 Nottinghamshire Domestic Violence Forum was launched and staffed initially by Nottinghamshire County Council. In 1997 Nottinghamshire County Council established the Domestic Violence Policy Officer post.

Nottingham City Council established its first Domestic Violence Policy Officer post in 1999 when it became a unitary authority and in 2000 local statutory and voluntary sector partners, including the Police, Probation and Health Services alongside the local authorities, Womens Aid and co-ordinated by NDVF launched one of the first high profile local domestic violence awareness campaigns in the UK, Free From Fear.

As part of Free From Fear partner agencies funded the first free phone 24 hour helpline in the UK (managed by Womens Aid) to ensure that survivors and agencies had access to advice, support and refuge.

From 2000 until 2010 Nottingham City Council and partner developed needs assessments, policies, good practice, strategies, task and finish groups and delivery groups on domestic violence and its various cross cutting themes, seeking to develop a joint perspective on domestic violence and to improve partnership working.

The statutory sector focussed during the 2000's on the development and establishment of specialist units and posts, such as the Police Domestic Abuse Support Unit, Probation's Perpetrator Programmes and Womens Support Services and one of the first specialist domestic abuse nurses in the UK, based in the Safeguarding Team, followed by one of the first specialist domestic abuse nurses based in the Emergency Department.

The Voluntary Sector developed new initiatives such as healthy relationship work in schools (GREAT project), training for the statutory and voluntary sector on domestic violence awareness and working with perpetrators, good practice for work with male victims and disabled survivors were developed and outreach services and support services for children were developed (Stronger Families).

In the mid 2000's national government encouraged a more structured approach to domestic violence by local authorities by setting Best Value Performance Indicator targets (BVPI 225) and Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets. This was the first time that Local Authorities domestic violence activities were measured by national government and had funding attached to them. Nottingham met its targets and gained pump priming funding for domestic violence projects through the LAA (including the Sanctuary Scheme).

A more structured statutory and voluntary partnership approach in localities followed with national government encouraging the setting up of Specialist Domestic Violence Courts (SDVC), Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) and Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC). These initiatives lead to the deployment of Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA's) and Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVA's).

From 2010 until 2012 Nottingham statutory partners have continued to manage changes in funding of domestic violence services from grant aid to commissioning and decommissioning services, the launch of Domestic Homicide Reviews and the establishment of Police and Crime Commissioners.

The voluntary sector has continued to innovate with the Stella Project (linking mental health, substance misuse, sexual violence and domestic violence), the Whole School Approach and the Whole Community Approach (in Aspley), development of websites and mobile phone applications.

Voluntary and Statutory partners are working together to develop new ways of working, such as the IRIS project (a partnership between GP's and Womens Aid) and 12 years on from the first partnership awareness campaign, The Man Enough Campaign against domestic violence has engaged the Nottingham Post, local sports teams and individuals, celebrities, businesses as well as the statutory and voluntary sectors.

The development of the Domestic Abuse Referral Team in 2012 (DART) and the planned development of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in 2013 build on the work of the MARAC's and should have a positive impact on partnership working and outcomes for survivors of domestic violence and their children. The development of Integrated Offender Management teams (IOM) within Probation and the Police to manage perpetrators of domestic violence should lead to improvements in holding them to account and in survivor safety.

3. National developments and legislation

The first refuge in the UK opened in Chiswick in 1971, Women's Aid Federation England was launched in 1974 and the first Government Select Committee on violence in marriage was established in 1975.

Three significant pieces of legislation were enacted in the late 1970's the Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act, Housing Act and Domestic Proceedings and Magistrates Court Act. In the 1980's relevant legislation included the Matrimonial Homes Act, Housing Act and Childrens Act. In the 1990's significant legislation included the Family Law Act, the Protection from Harassment Act and the Crime and Disorder Act

In 1991 the first National Interagency Working Party on domestic violence sat and the Home Affairs Select Committee on domestic violence reported. This was also the year that rape in marriage became a criminal offence.

In 1994 Womens Aid, the Home Office and the Body Shop engaged in the first national campaigns to raise awareness of domestic violence with the public and agencies. In the mid 1990's the

Department of Health published a report into maternal deaths and found that domestic violence played a significant part. In 1998 Stanko produced Counting the Costs research into the financial impact of domestic violence on communities, agencies and the UK economy.

Women's Aid Federation England published Families without Fear in 1998 the precursor to the first national domestic violence government strategy Living without Fear in 1999.

In the 2000's legislation included the Children and Adoption Act, the Anti Social Behaviour Act, the Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act, the Gender Equality Duty and Forced Marriage Civil Protection Act.

A significant step change for local partnerships was the Local Government Association launch of consultation on domestic violence 2004 which became BVPI 225 and the LAA domestic violence targets. This forced local authorities to dramatically improve the level of services, for local agencies such as the police to properly record and report domestic violence and convincing levels of funding for services other than refuges.

National best practice was published on the development of Specialist Domestic Violence Courts, Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences and Sexual Assault Referral Centres. National agencies such as the Department of Health and the Crown Prosecution Service developed good practice guidance. The Mental Health Bill and Act in 2007 gave guidance for victims of domestic violence. The Stella Toolkit on domestic violence and substance misuse was published, Making the Links report on the impact of domestic violence on disabled survivors was published and the Department of Health published Improving Safety.

Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA) was launched, the End Violence Against Women Coalition was formed, Standing Together Against Domestic Violence was established and three significant help lines were launched in this period, Broken Rainbow for Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) survivors, the Men's Advice Line for male survivors and the National 24 hour free phone Helpline (run by Respect and Women's Aid Federation England respectively).

From 2010 to 2012 Government has published or publicised reports on The Impact of Domestic Violence on Womens Health, The Stern report on Rape, a Report on the Sexualisation of Young People, a Report on the Impact of Domestic Violence on Teenage Relationships, The Impact of Gangs on Young Women and Girls, a Commissioning Guide for Health Services, Family Justice Review on the impact of domestic violence on children and Crown Prosecution Service guidance.

National reports and research impact on the development of policy and lead for example to pilots for Protection Orders and Disclosure Orders which have been launched (including in Nottingham) and national consultation on the criminalisation of Forced Marriage.

Together we can End Violence Against Women and Girls published in 2009 by the Home Office has been republished as the national domestic and sexual violence strategy Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls with an annual action plan. A new definition of domestic violence has been published, which includes the concept of coercive control and lowers the age of survivors to 16.

The impact of planned changes in national policy and legislation from 2012, including the Borders Agency being responsible for funding survivors with no recourse to public funds, cuts to Welfare Benefits, reductions in Legal Aid are not fully understood, however some implications are obvious, including refuges silting up, survivors not engaging in civil law and survivors with no recourse to public funds struggling to access refuge.

4. Conclusion

Changes to the landscape of the domestic and sexual violence sector have gathered pace and the definition of violence to women and children has expanded to include other forms of violence such as Honour Based Violence, Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation and include abuse to

men and in same sex relationships. Violence and abuse is seen in the context of gender inequality and is currently central to a range of agencies priorities, including crime prevention, safeguarding children and vulnerable adults and the physical, mental and sexual health agenda.

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