



Newham Domestic Violence Forum

**LONDON BOROUGH OF NEWHAM**

**RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE**

**STRATEGY**

**2005 – 2007**

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**REVISED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE STRATEGY**  
**LONDON BOROUGH OF NEWHAM**

**Introduction**

Domestic Violence is a crime. It does not respect race, geography, social background or other similar factors. It is a volume crime, affecting one in four women and one in six men in their lifetime, with women suffering higher rates of repeated victimisation and serious injury. It is just as much about verbal abuse and controlling behaviour as it is about physical or sexual violence. In most cases domestic violence is a continuous service of attacks rather than a one-off incident. It becomes more frequent and severe over time. Domestic Violence accounts for 16% of violent crime, covering offences ranging from common assault to rape and murder, and it has a massive impact on victims, their children and wider community. Domestic Violence is also a major indicator of risk to children, and perpetrators who are violent to their female partners are also frequently violent to their children. Recent research highlights the importance of the impact that domestic violence has on society. It is estimated to cost society around £236bn annually in England and Wales with £36bn falling to public services. (See Appendix 1 for breakdown of costs)

With the publication of the London Domestic Violence Strategy in November 2001 and the recent government bill entitled Domestic Violence, Crime & Victims Act, the issue has never been higher on the political agenda. (Appendix II)

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This strategy sets out a vision for effectively addressing the issue of physical, sexual etc. violence in the home. Although the term 'Violence in the home' suggests physical abuse there are a whole range of abusive behaviours, which can form part of the problem and are not necessarily in themselves violent. Violence can be physical, sexual, verbal or financial.

This Strategy details the specific steps that will be taken to achieve this in the London Borough of Newham. This interim two-year strategy and action plan builds on our previous strategy and action plan and was reviewed because:

- Domestic violence is the crime of violence most women are most likely to experience, and domestic violence accounts for about one third of all violent offences in Newham, reflecting the London trend.
- Effective co-ordination of services in the London Borough of Newham is needed to provide more effective and economic interventions
- There is a need to reduce the number of times women report/request help for domestic violence provision by ensuring that services are joined up and meet the needs of service users at every point of contact
- There is a need to create consistent quality responses across the borough. A service driven by priorities and focussed on outcomes. It is therefore essential that agencies work together to address domestic violence within the borough.

### **Aims of the Strategy**

The overall aim of the Domestic Violence Strategy for the London borough of Newham is to reduce the level of domestic violence by:

- Increase safe choices for victims fleeing domestic violence
- Hold violent men accountable for their abusive behaviour towards their partners
- Provide public education to raise awareness of domestic violence in the community
- Educate children and young people as to the impact and effects of domestic violence

We have sought to include the achievable key principles of good practice and recommendations contained in the London Borough of Newham's Domestic Violence Review (December 2004), which comprehensively reviewed domestic violence services within the borough. (See Appendix III)

## **Background**

### **Domestic Violence Statistics**

It is well established that domestic violence is massively under-reported, only 25% of incidents are reported to the Police. Most research suggest that about half of all DV relationships involve contact with a professional agency although not every incidence within this relationship will always be reported.

Newham has experienced an increase in reported domestic violence offences of 13% from 2757 in 2001/02 to 3107 in 2003/04. Newham reports the second highest level of domestic violence of London boroughs. The increase does not necessarily equate to an increase in domestic violence activity but could equate to increased reporting and recording of this type of offence. The proportion of repeat victims of domestic violence has reduced slightly: from 18% of victims to 16% over the audit period. During 2003/04 40% of all common assault offences in Newham were flagged as domestic violence from 16 in 2001/02 to 37 in 2003/04.

Our aim is to create an environment where domestic violence is not tolerated and that women and children surviving domestic violence will choose to live work and stay in Newham. The strategy provides a framework with shared definitions, understanding and action points that wil allow agencies to work collaboratively and effectively to ensure that women and receive better protection and support, and that violence is challenged and prevented.

'Accurate monitoring' of DV in order to ascertain the prevalence of DV has been a target of the Community Safety Strategy in the London Borough of Newham since 2000. To achieve this the need for a common monitoring system across agencies (DV1 common reporting Referral Form) has had success. This is mainly due to the ownership and commitment at a management level from all specialist and DV agencies to develop and implement a common monitoring system as well as the wide differences in the types of data that are monitored by individual agencies.

### **Newham's Domestic Violence Forum**

The London Borough of Newham's Domestic Violence Forum meets six times a year, and is currently chaired by the Service Manager for Domestic Violence. Its members comprise representatives of local authority, Police, health trusts, probation, Metropolitan Police and Voluntary Sector agencies whose work brings them into contact with Victims of domestic violence. The aims and terms of reference for Newham's Domestic Violence Forum are outlined in Appendix IV.

It is intended that our interim strategy will be followed by a three-year strategy for the period 2007-2010.

### **Understanding the Issue**

Domestic Violence is widespread throughout every socio-economic group. Most research suggests that domestic violence occurs in all sections of society irrespective of race, class, culture, nationality, religion, sexuality, disability, age or educational level

Nevertheless, each abused woman has a set of unique circumstances, which affects how she responds to the violence. Services need to be sufficiently flexible to take account of this whilst also being sufficiently standardised to provide a similar response to similar circumstances.

The most effective interventions are ones that support the woman and children, which increases her choices. Safety must be an overriding priority at all times.

Domestic Violence is best understood as a pattern of behaviour designed to achieve power and control rather than as a single incident or even a series of incidents.

### **Definition**

Domestic violence is the physical, emotional, sexual and psychological abuse of one person by another in a personal or family relationship. The overwhelming majority of domestic violence and the most severe and chronic incidents are perpetrated by men against female partners or ex-partners. Children are often indirectly or directly affected by the violence. The violence involves men's abuse of power over women and is related to the subordinate social and economic position of women in society. The violence often escalates and has far reaching consequences on the lives of women and children. Violence is universal; women from all backgrounds can experience violence, equally men from any background can

be violent. Different groups of women face additional issues and barriers when seeking help.

**Some Facts**

- 90% of domestic violence is by men against women (British Crime Survey, 1996)
- 1 in 4 women have been physically assaulted by their partner or ex-partner at sometime in her life (ibid)
- In England and Wales a woman is killed every three days by her partner or ex-partner. (ibid)
- Domestic violence accounts for one quarter of all recorded violent crime (British Crime Survey, 1996)
- One in four separations involve violence (Exeter Family Study 1994)

## **Priority Area 1**

### **Increase Safe choices for Victims fleeing and living with Domestic Violence**

#### **Why this area?**

This approach recognises that the responses to domestic violence need to be broad based and multi-layered. We need to develop a range of interventions that address all aspects of the problem and are preventative as well as protective. We need to work with children, victims, perpetrators and the community at large.

#### **How will this be achieved?**

By increasing safe choices for anyone living in Newham who experience domestic violence so that they might plan safer futures to live, work and stay in Newham without comprising their quality of life by developing a range of community support.

The findings from the borough-wide Domestic Violence review and service user consultation process (December 2004) are central to informing the development of Newham's Domestic Violence Strategy.

#### **Why a Priority?**

Women experiencing violence often disclose to family, friends or community contacts before or instead of approaching agencies for help. Developing the capacity for the communities to offer good information and safe appropriate support for women and children can be an opportunity for early intervention and minimise the harm and distress to women and children.

Many women turn to agencies for information, advice, support and protection. Whilst much work has been done to improve the responses of agencies in Newham, opportunities still exist to improve co-ordination and consistency of responses across the borough.

#### **Key Actions**

- All partner agencies to develop own action plans and policies based on the principles based on the principles and information contained in this strategy, including addressing the needs of women staff.
- To develop baseline monitoring systems

- To provide appropriate training for staff at all levels to ensure there is a consistent level of understanding, skills and knowledge to support women and children
- To consider issues for particular groups of women in service delivery
- Enable the sharing of good practice and develop joint working
- Integrating issues of domestic violence into local community safety plans
- To continue to fund the post of a Domestic Violence Manager
- To promote the concept of developing a one stop shop model for Domestic Violence/other hate crimes in London Borough of Newham

## **Priority Area 2**

### **Hold Violent Men accountable for their Abusive Behaviour towards their Partners by ensuring an appropriate Civil and Criminal Justice Response**

#### **Why a Priority?**

The civil and criminal justice system plays a key role in the protection of women and their children. It is one of the primary institutions to which abused women turn to seek safety for themselves and their children.

Additionally the civil and criminal justice system has a role in sending clear messages to perpetrators and society that domestic violence is a crime and will not be tolerated.

#### **Key Actions**

- To promote the training of all those involved in the civil and criminal justice system
- To ensure that women have access to appropriate advice and advocacy services
- To promote effective working relationships between the key domestic violence support agencies, and legal and advice service providers
- To promote a supportive approach for women using the civil and criminal justice system and consistent sanction for perpetrators
- To implement government proposals on improving the protection of women
- To promote the setting up of a specialist domestic violence court within London Borough of Newham

### **Priority Area 3**

#### **Educate children and young people as to the impact and effects of Domestic Violence**

##### **Why a Priority?**

There are many myths and much misinformation about domestic violence that underpin the public's attitudes and understanding. Research has shown that some young people think that violence to a partner is acceptable in some circumstances. For many a level of violence in their lives is commonplace and accepted as inevitable. It is essential therefore that public educational work is undertaken to challenge and change the perceptions that domestic violence is ever acceptable or justifiable. It is particularly important to undertake this work with young people from a very early age, and continue to address the issues in a comprehensive and developmental way throughout their school life.

##### **Key Actions**

- To develop and disseminate appropriate curricular materials for use in schools in conjunction with appropriate training to deliver the materials where relevant using a multi-agency approach
- To integrate issues of domestic violence within existing training for all those involved with the support and education of children and young people. To promote additional specific training with specialist groups
- To revise and promote Education Guidelines on responding to domestic violence
- To develop educational approaches within colleges and universities to ensure the inclusion of issues relating to women experiencing violence from men they know within appropriate curricula
- To explore ways in which informal educational settings, for example within the Youth Service, can also be used to stimulate discussions with young people and where necessary to challenge and change perceptions and attitudes
- To promote research with young people to evaluate the impact of using materials and identify successful approaches

### **Priority Area 4**

## **Provide Public Education to raise Awareness of Domestic Violence in the Community**

### **Why a Priority?**

Many women turn to agencies for information, advice and support and protection. Whilst much work has been done to improve the responses of agencies in Newham, opportunities still exist to improve co-ordination and consistency of responses across the borough.

### **Key Actions**

- To develop and implement a Domestic Violence Publicity Strategy, to raise awareness and dispel myths, across the borough, to include the business community
- To look at allocating resources to an awareness raising event on the understanding of domestic violence and other hate crimes for professionals and community in London Borough of Newham
- Disseminate information to communities in a range of accessible languages
- Promote community activities

### **Implementation**

Nothing contained within this strategy is impossible to develop, and the benefits have the potential to be far reaching.

This strategy will be implemented over a 2/3-year period with regular assessments to ensure progress is made.

Some of the changes needed to effectively address the issue of domestic violence within the London Borough of Newham are beyond the jurisdiction of the Service Manager, Domestic Violence. The Mayor for the London Borough of Newham and lead Council Members will be asked to provide Leadership for Newham in reducing and preventing domestic violence and encourage other organisations, statutory, voluntary and private, to contribute to realising the vision set out in this Strategy.

### **Partnership & Reporting Structures**

Newham's Domestic Violence Forum is locally accountable to the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP), which reports to the Local Strategic Partnership board, as such:

- The Domestic Violence Forum will work in partnership to ensure a co-ordinated response to promote joint working, co-operation and support
- All Domestic Violence Forum members' wil work towards implementing the recommendations contained within this Strategy, protocols and minimum standards.
- Newham's Domestic Violence Forum will produce regular reports to the CDRP and an annual report detailing progress and plans for the coming years.
- The Domestic Violence Forum will oversee the strategic development of the Domestic Violence Forum Action Plan and will meet six times per year to ensure that objectives, targets and outcomes are met.

## **APPENDIX I**

### **Cost of Domestic Violence - Nationally**

Recent research has estimated that the cost of domestic violence for the state, employers and the men and women who are subjected to it is a staggering £5.7 billion a year. The estimate of costs provides an additional perspective for examining the devastating consequences of domestic violence for society as well as victims.

The total cost of domestic violence to services (Criminal Justice System, Health, Social Services, Housing, Civil & Legal) amounts to £3.1 billion, while the loss to the economy is £2.7 billion. The costs can be broken down as follows:

- Criminal Justice System - £1 billion per year
- Health Care - £1.2 billion per year
- Social Services - £.25 billion per year
- Housing - £.16 billion per year
- Civil & Legal - £.3 billion per year
- Economic Output - £2.7 billion per year

Including all costs, the total cost of domestic violence for the state, employers and victims is estimated at around £23 billion.

(Ref Professor S. Walbys - University of Leeds 2004)

## **APPENDIX II**

### **Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Bill (December 2004)**

In June 2003 the government published its consultation document 'Safety and Justice' setting out its proposals to prevent domestic violence, improve support and protection for victims, and bring more perpetrators to justice. Resulting from this the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Bill was published in December 2003 and includes the following measures:

- Significant new Police powers to deal with domestic violence including making it an arrestable, criminal offence to breach a non-molestation order, with penalty of up to 5 years in prison.
- Making common assault an arrestable offence.
- Stronger legal protection for victims by extending the use of restraining orders-giving courts the power to impose a restraining order where the dependant has been acquitted by the court believes and order is necessary to protect the victim.
- Providing a code of practice, binding on all criminal justice agencies, so that all victims receive the support, protection, information and advice they need.
- Allowing victims to make their case to the Parliamentary Ombudsman if they feel the Code had not been adhered to by the criminal justice agencies.
- Setting up an independent commissioner for victims to give victims a powerful voice at the heart of Government and to safeguard and promote the interests of victims and witnesses encouraging the spread of good practice and reviewing the statutory code.
- Amending the Harassment Act 1997 to ensure that victims have their say if an application is made to change a restraining order that is protecting them from abuse of harassment.
- Strengthening the civil law on domestic abuse

## **APPENDIX III**

### **Key Principles of Good Practice**

#### **The Minimum Standards**

1. All agencies should be able to demonstrate that they are actively working to make their services accessible to the needs of victims of domestic violence from the ethnic minority communities, to disabled people, to older people, to people with drug or alcohol dependency, to people with mental health problems, to lesbians and to gay men.
2. All agencies should have clear methods for identifying the obvious signs of domestic violence, but also, where appropriate, each agency should develop a proactive 'screening' for domestic violence that includes routine questioning to identify any DV issues.
3. Leaflets, poster and other information on DV should be displayed in areas opened to the public to publicise the fact that agencies will treat domestic violence seriously and will respond to all service-user needing help in a supportive and helpful manner.
4. There should be consultation with local specialist DV agencies to ensure that they are actively engaged in the development and planning of services that are relevant to domestic violence victims.
5. There should be domestic violence training provided to all levels including reception staff, senior managers and voluntary sector agencies, their management Committees and/or Board of Trustees.
6. Domestic violence training provided should be monitored to ensure that staff at all levels are trained and are aware of how to respond to these issues when it is presented or disclosed.
7. There should be systems in place to assess the effectiveness of the agency's response to DV victims and not always rely on the DV agencies in the voluntary sector to deal with this issue.
8. As employers, agencies should have a DV policy for its own employees which sets out an appropriate response to members of staff who may be experiencing or perpetrating domestic violence. This should include employees who are victims of DV, utilising employer resources such as email and telephones to either access information for support themselves as well as those

using resources to intimidate and harass.

9. Agencies should ensure that information About statutory and voluntary Dv services is easily accessible to staff and the public. Agencies with websites should ensure that there is a link DV to help and support.
10. Agencies dealing with DV should actively participate in their local DV Forum to ensure that there is effective co-ordination of service provision.
11. All agencies should assure victims that theirs is a safe and supportive environment for victims of DV so that they feel safe to report violence and abuse that they may be experiencing from their partners.
12. There should be an effective DV monitoring system in place and regular evaluation of the take up and effectiveness of services should be carried out by all relevant agencies. The success of any initiative to reduce or prevent domestic violence depends on a careful implementation strategy and needs to be confirmed through evaluation and monitoring.
13. There should be protocols in place for the safe sharing of information with other agencies to ensure services are properly co-ordinated. However, information should be shared only for the purpose of increasing the victim's safety.
14. There should be a specific person identified within all agencies with clearly defined duties and responsibilities for DV and where possible this responsibility should be either par to of the job description or work plan.

**Reference:** Greater London Authority - London Wide  
Domestic Violence Strategy 2002

## **APPENDIX IV**

### **London Borough of Newham Domestic Violence Forum Terms of Reference:**

#### **Principles**

Members of this group accept:

1. Research indicates that overwhelmingly women experience violence from men. This violence is an abuse of male power perpetrated along a continuum of oppressive behaviours and attitudes.
2. Domestic Violence is unacceptable behaviour and often a crime; and all women have a right to live their lives free of violence or threat of violence.
3. Domestic Violence is experienced regardless of race, age, sexuality, culture, religion, social class and disability. Work should be undertaken to address the needs of all women.
4. The safety and protection of women and children should underpin all interventions by agencies.
5. In addition to immediate needs for safety and protection, longer-term support for women and children may be essential to ensure that they are able to live free of violence.
6. No single agency can address (or be expected to address) all the needs of women and children experiencing domestic violence. Partnership working is essential to develop and deliver effective and appropriate services.

#### **Specifically this group will:**

1. Be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the London Borough of Newham's Domestic Violence Strategy & Policy.
2. Promote and maintain joint work to improve services for domestic violence survivors.
3. Work to ensure the provision of appropriate services for children and young people affected by domestic violence.
4. Develop joint policies and procedures between agencies to co-ordinate service provision.
5. Identify any gaps in service provision and opportunities for further resources.
6. Provide regular feedback to the London Borough of Newham's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
7. Participate in any evaluation work to address domestic violence in the London Borough of Newham.
8. Ensure the profile of domestic violence is raised through local and national agendas.

9. Campaign and respond to relevant government legislation.

### **Responsibilities**

1. Meetings will be held on a bi-monthly basis and members will give a commitment to attend meetings or send an appropriate representative.
2. Meetings will be facilitated by the London Borough of Newham and Service Manager for Domestic Violence.
3. Members will act as representatives of their agency and have the authority to attend and take decisions on their behalf or ensure that agreement or approval is.
4. Agencies should work to create a safe and supportive environment, which encourages people to report domestic violence.
5. Services must be fully accessible to all. Agencies must be aware of the needs of women from ethnic minorities, those with disabilities, elderly people, those with drug or alcohol dependency, people with mental health problems and those in same sex relationships.
6. The success of any initiative to reduce domestic violence depends on a careful implementation strategy and needs to be confirmed through evaluation and monitoring.

Agencies should consider the importance of information sharing (section 115 of the Crime and Disorder Act) as a valuable part in the co-ordination of their client-based services.

The London Borough of Newham will support agencies signing up to the strategy and help them work to achieve these aims and develop individual agency policies and action plans.

The London Borough of Newham will also play a key role in guiding and supporting those agencies who are not already involved with domestic violence work to improve their awareness and to work on developing appropriate service provision.

- Increase Safe choices for Victims Fleeing and Living with Domestic Violence
- Hold Violent Men Accountable for their Abusive Behaviour
- Educate Children & Yong People as to the impact and effects of Domestic Violence
- Provide Public Education to raise Awareness of Domestic Violence in the Community