

## Community Well Being & Safety Scrutiny Committee



### Scrutiny Review

*A review to evaluate how the Council contributes to tackling and preventing domestic abuse in the Vale of Glamorgan.*

### Final Report January 2007

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## Foreword



*Cllr Janice Birch, Chairman  
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I am pleased to present the Community Wellbeing and Safety Scrutiny Review of Domestic Abuse in the Vale of Glamorgan.

This review focused on examining the work of the Council and its partners in the provision of services in relation to Domestic Abuse. The review sought to identify strengths, weaknesses, gaps in existing services within the Vale and also consider good practice from outside the area.

During the review a workshop was conducted that engaged with a cross-section of agencies representative of the Domestic Abuse Forum including a number of others not part of the forum. This workshop provided an opportunity for Scrutiny Members to meet with a variety of agencies to discuss the issues in relation to domestic abuse and identify improvement actions for a way forward. The success of these workshops set the theme for the rest of the review.

To further understand the complex nature of domestic abuse, I conducted a series of interviews with agencies to discover how effectively agencies interact and to explore some the issues in greater detail. Four Assembly Members were also interviewed and asked to identify the key challenges in relation to domestic abuse. In addition, a series of four interviews were conducted with past and present service users that had experienced domestic abuse and received some level of support from agencies in the Vale. All service users were asked to rate their experience of services they had received and comment on how such services could be further improved in the future.

The final part of the review involved a small group of Committee members conducting site visits. Members visited units in the Vale and Pontypridd to compare and contrast facilities and to learn from good practice.

This new style of approach has been a valuable way for both Members and agencies to understand the emotive issues and complexities associated with domestic abuse. The

review has enabled Members of the Committee to better understand their role and responsibilities in relation to domestic abuse as well as appreciate the variety of services that are available for victims of domestic abuse in the Vale.

I would like to thank all officers, partner agencies and service users for their generous time and support with the review. As a result of such wide participation, the review has highlighted that a very complex issue can be effectively tackled through good partnership working. The findings of this review has enabled the committee to identify key areas of improvement for the future and to build on the existing key strengths to ensure long-term sustainability for service provision in the future. The improvement areas identified as part of this review have in turn informed the committee's choice of recommendations to ensure that domestic abuse is effectively tackled in the Vale of Glamorgan.

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## **Executive Summary**

The Community Wellbeing and Safety Scrutiny Committee has responsibility to examine the work of the Council and its partners in the provision of services in the areas of housing, community safety and social services. Its task is to actively promote improvement by testing the effectiveness of this work and recommending ways in which greater benefit may be obtained for the community as a whole.

The review of domestic abuse forms part of the 2005/06 planned work programme of the Community Well Being and Safety Scrutiny Committee. Review scope and timescales were agreed in March 2006 and it was also agreed to delay the start of the review to allow the Committee to concentrate on the review of Homelessness.

Appendix A of the report contains the review scoping document, which outlines the objectives and purpose of carrying out the review including the desired outcomes.

The findings of the report are that the Vale of Glamorgan is falling behind other authorities in its ability to tackle and prevent domestic abuse. Whilst the Domestic Abuse Forum meets regularly and has many dedicated members, there is no co-ordinated approach. It lacks direction; there is no strategy or action plan in place, and a lack of monitoring by or links with the Community Safety Partnership.

A number of recommendations have been made to the Executive in relation to how the Council could address these shortcomings and move forward in order to contributed to tackling and preventing domestic abuse in the Vale.

# **1 Introduction**

## **1.1 What is Domestic Abuse?**

Domestic abuse refers to any incident of violence or aggression, wherever and whenever it occurs. The abuse may include physical, sexual, emotional or financial abuse of an individual by a family member, partner, or ex-partner in an existing or previous relationship, regardless of gender, culture or sexual orientation.<sup>1</sup>

They can include behaviours used by one person in a relationship to control the other. Examples include

- name calling, humiliation or degradation
- isolating from family or friends
- withholding money
- stopping a partner from getting or keeping a job
- actual or threatened physical, emotional or psychological harm
- sexual abuse or assault
- stalking
- intimidation.

Abuse occurs across society regardless of age, gender, race, sexuality, wealth and geography and victims suffer on many levels – health, housing, education, lose of freedom and despite all of the statistics, domestic abuse is still under reported and often hidden by the victim.

Whilst the terms domestic violence and domestic abuse are interchangeable and generally used to refer to the same issues, the decision has been made to refer to domestic abuse (DA) throughout this report as it has a more all encompassing literal meaning.

## **1.2 Impact on Children**

The Women's Aid Confederation of England in 2004 published a report that stated that in 39% of cases of domestic abuse children are direct witnesses, more recently in 2006 Welsh Women's Aid reported that in a third of cases children try and intervene during physical attacks and will often feel guilty if they were unable to come to their mother's aid. They have also estimated that as many as 150,000 children and young people are affected by domestic abuse at any one time in Wales.

A recent report by Unicef focused on the impact on children who live in a violent home.<sup>2</sup> The report is the first to ever try and actually quantify the level of the problem across the world - in the UK they estimate that between 240,000 and 963,000 children could be living with domestic violence.

The report highlights what children need so that they can be better protected from the effects of domestic abuse and better supported in healing following exposure to violence, this can be summarised, as children need:

- a safe and secure home environment

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<sup>1</sup> South Wales Police – Domestic Abuse Report Form (FSU9).

<sup>2</sup> Behind Closed Doors, The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children, Unicef 2006.

- to know that there are adults who will listen to them, believe them and shelter them.
- a sense of routine and normality
- support services to meet their needs.
- to learn that domestic abuse is wrong and learn non-violent methods of resolving conflicts.
- adults to speak out and break the silence.

The report concludes that in order to move forward policymakers must raise awareness of the impact of domestic abuse and violence on children, create public policy and laws to protect children and provide enhanced social services that address the impact of violence in the home on children.

Violence at home can have an enormous impact on children, whether they witness the incidents or because of increased risks of direct abuse to the children themselves. Every child will react and be affected by domestic abuse differently and needs to be dealt with as an individual. Witnessing or hearing violence has been shown to have a range of long term effects on children including guilt, shame, terror, sadness, aggressive behaviour, low self-esteem, bedwetting, eating disorders, depression and insecurity. It could result in educational under achievement, juvenile crime, substance misuse or mental health problems.

### **1.3 Local Government's Role and Responsibilities**

Whilst there is no statutory requirement to provide a Domestic Abuse Service, the Council has a vital role to play in tackling domestic abuse. In addition to providing services and raising awareness, a council's role at the heart of local communities means that they are well placed to lead local partnerships – bringing all the necessary agencies together to tackle the issues.

Domestic abuse causes considerable damage to individuals, families and the community. It impacts on a range of services such as housing, education and social services. A recent study commissioned by the Women's Equality Unit estimated that the total annual cost to services and the economy is £5.7 billion; this is excluding the human and emotional costs to the individuals involved. Much of this cost is born by local authorities, mainly in housing and social services costs.<sup>3</sup>

Councils have a key role along side other agencies in tackling domestic abuse by safeguarding survivors, offering services to reduce the impact of the abuse and holding perpetrators to account. Also, as community leaders councils play a key role in local partnerships. Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, local authorities have a statutory responsibility to work with other agencies to reduce crime and disorder in their local area.

Domestic abuse is often self-perpetuating. Children grow up in a violent family may be unsettled in school and experience emotional, physical or behavioural problems. They may grow up with dependency or mental health problems and as a result end up in violent relationships themselves. All of this requires support from Council services. If the cycle, or pattern of behaviour could be broken, there is the potential to prevent the need for

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<sup>3</sup> The Cost of Domestic Violence, Women and Equality Unit, DTI 2004.

further Council service involvement in a family, possibly saving costs in the longer term.

#### **1.4 Strategic Direction – Links to Corporate Aims and Objectives**

##### **The Vale of Glamorgan Community Strategy 2003-2013**

One of the key aims of the Community Strategy is to '*reduce levels of crime and disorder, targeting the social and economic factors which often encourage anti-social behaviour*'. This section identifies domestic violence as a strategic issue stating that '*concerted efforts must be made to encourage victims to come forward and report all forms of domestic abuse.*' The Vale's Community Safety Partnership has prepared a Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy that highlights actions to achieve these objectives. (See section 2.2.4)

##### **Corporate Plan 2005-2009**

Tackling and preventing domestic abuse falls within the Council's Corporate Priority of Community Well Being, however there are no key targets or actions that directly help to reduce incidents or support victims within the Vale of Glamorgan.

##### **Making the Connections**

All local actions taken by the Council must be set against the all-Wales policies of the Welsh Assembly Government. '*Making the Connections*' 2004 sets out the Assembly's vision for improving public services generally in Wales and is based on the four themes of:

- putting the customer centre stage
- working together as the Welsh public service
- making the best of resources
- engaging with the workforce.

The second of these themes places a strong importance on a move towards multi agency local public service providers with the Council at the centre and everyone working towards the furtherance of common goals in order to improve the overall service received by the community. Best practice indicates that the most effective way of tackling and addressing the problems related to domestic abuse is by taking a co-ordinated multi agency approach.

## **2 Current Situation**

### **2.1 The National Perspective**

Home Office key statistics show that:

- Domestic abuse accounts for almost a fifth of all recorded violent crimes
- Nearly half of all female murder victims are killed by a current or former partner.
- Statistically every two minutes the police receive a domestic abuse call and every week two women are killed by a partner or ex-partner.
- Domestic abuse is the largest cause of morbidity in women aged 19-44, greater than war, cancer or motor vehicle accidents
- Domestic abuse is also a primary indicator of child protection needs with children living in violent households significantly more likely to experience child abuse themselves.
- The British Crime Survey (BCS) interviews for 2005/06 showed that of all violent crimes, domestic violence had the highest rate of repeat victimisation, with 43% of victims being victimised more than once, and almost one in four (23%) being victimised three or more times.
- 15% of violent incidents recorded in the BCS in 2005/06 were incidents of domestic violence.

Department of health figures in 2002 state that at least 750,000 children a year witness domestic violence. Nearly three quarters of children on at risk registers live in households where domestic violence occurs.

The Home Office Statistical Bulletin, July 2006 – '*Crime in England and Wales 2005/06*' is a report based on two sources of data. The British Crime Survey (BCS) and police recorded crime data. Overall, the BCS shows that crime is stabilising after long periods of reduction. Police recorded crime shows a one per cent reduction in the number of overall crimes recorded during 2005/06, following increases after the introduction of the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) in April 2002, which improved and standardised the methods for collecting and reporting crime data.

The BCS shows a percentage change in domestic violence cases between 1995 and 2005/06 as a reduction of 64%; overall violent crimes were down by 43%. However, the proportion of violent incidents reported to the police has increased from 30% in 1981 to 45% in 2005/06. This increase has been particularly marked in the last few years and represents a greater increase than that for offences as a whole. Along with the significant changes in recording practices, the increased reporting explains why the BCS and recorded crime statistics present contrasting trends in violent crimes. While estimates from the BCS show large falls in violent crime since a peak in 1995, the number of violent crimes recorded by the police have substantially increased over the same period.

The Home Office strategic approach to tackling domestic abuse arose from the consultation document '*Safety and Justice: The Government's Proposals on Domestic Violence*', 2003. This fed into the Domestic Violence Crime and Survivors Act (2004). The Welsh Assembly Government developed the '*Tackling Domestic Abuse: The All Wales Strategy*', 2005. This document

acknowledged that there is a significant overlap between the abuse of women and the abuse of children. The message from Edwina Hart AM was that domestic abuse must not be tolerated in Wales on any level, perpetrators must be held to account and victims must be protected and supported.

The strategy aims to facilitate the development and implementation of a joined up problem solving approach that addresses domestic abuse holistically – providing protection and simultaneously addressing the causes.

The Strategy has three key principles around which all other aims, objectives and actions across Wales can be grouped:

- protection and support for victims
- prevention
- perpetrator accountability.

The strategy recommendations are that –

Tackling domestic abuse and its causes requires:

- Individual agencies/organisations/employers to adhere to 'minimum standards'
- Specific measures aimed at tackling domestic abuse to be incorporated into local Community Safety Plans.
- Domestic Abuse Fora to work closely with Community Safety Partnerships to assist with this work.
- Tackling domestic abuse and effects on children should be a key task of Area Child protection Committees (which are being replaced by Local Safeguarding Boards).

The Welsh Assembly Government has indicated that they consider the way forward for tackling domestic abuse in Wales is by adopting a co-ordinated multi agency approach and they have flagged up the Women's Safety Unit in Cardiff as best practice and a model that they would encourage and support other authorities to adopt.

## **2.2 The Local Perspective - Domestic Violence in the Vale of Glamorgan**

Figures collected for the financial year 2004/05 showed the following:

- The Domestic Abuse Police Unit in Barry dealt with 1,718 domestic abuse incidents in the period. Of these 274 were male and 1,392 female.
- 4,104 telephone calls for help and advice were made to the domestic abuse support unit.
- 291 referrals of domestic abuse cases were made to the Children's Team in Community Services.
- Police data shows that 33% of all violent crimes reported in the Vale of Glamorgan are based on domestic abuse.

South Wales Police Statistics show the following number of recorded domestic violence incidents;

*Total number of domestic violence incidents by division on a monthly basis, 2005-06*

	<b>A div (Aberdare)</b>	<b>B div (Merthyr)</b>	<b>C div (Cardiff)</b>	<b>E div (The Vale)</b>	<b>F div (Bridgend)</b>	<b>G div (Neath)</b>	<b>H div (Swansea)</b>	<b>Force</b>
Apr 05	89	256	278	148	131	165	287	1,354
May 05	110	340	293	138	121	155	286	1,443
Jun 05	71	311	318	136	115	197	250	1,398
Jul 05	92	322	365	143	110	185	338	1,555
Aug 05	45	362	358	155	96	168	292	1,476
Sep 05	64	316	346	172	115	174	243	1,430
Oct 05	76	288	303	148	110	142	272	1,339
Nov 05	68	342	309	107	118	155	262	1,361
Dec 05	61	340	315	146	131	144	257	1,394
Jan 06	76	306	316	154	108	106	285	1,351
Feb 06	51	295	325	176	74	110	244	1,275
Mar 06	89	289	398	144	80	165	250	1,415
<b>Total</b>	<b>892</b>	<b>3,767</b>	<b>3,924</b>	<b>1,767</b>	<b>1,309</b>	<b>1,866</b>	<b>3,266</b>	<b>16,791</b>

These figures indicate that whilst the number of domestic violence incidents reported to the police are the highest in Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil and Swansea, this is closely followed by Neath Port Talbot and the Vale with a difference of less than 100 incidents difference. The monthly figures are fairly consistent.

*Total number of domestic violence – repeat victim incidents by division on a monthly basis, 2005-06*

<b>2005-2006</b>	<b>A div (Aberdare)</b>	<b>B div (Merthyr)</b>	<b>C div (Cardiff)</b>	<b>E div (The Vale)</b>	<b>F div (Bridgend)</b>	<b>G div (Neath)</b>	<b>H div (Swansea)</b>	<b>Force</b>
April	6	28	19	4	65	18	12	152
May	29	49	39	11	38	8	16	190
June	23	49	28	1	30	11	8	150
July	13	45	46	4	37	8	12	165
Aug	2	52	37	8	32	13	18	162
Sep	2	46	40	3	22	16	10	139
Oct	3	69	30	3	17	15	19	156
Nov	3	52	32	5	13	15	3	123
Dec	5	41	25	8	14	14	8	115
Jan	5	41	9	6	16	9	9	95
Feb	0	45	17	2	5	19	6	94
March	0	21	27	2	20	18	8	96
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>1,637</b>

Despite the Vale of Glamorgan having the fifth highest total number of incidents, this table indicates that the Vale has the lowest number of repeat victims. The low number of repeat victims could be interpreted as a positive indicator that the police are tackling the high risk cases and successfully

prosecuting, however it could also be an indication that for whatever reason the victims are not reporting subsequent incidents to the police.

The Police Domestic Abuse Unit have confirmed that whilst the total number of referrals they have received has increased steadily over the last three years, this is the second year running that the figures for repeat victims have been low.

## **2.3 Women's Aid**

The Vale of Glamorgan Women's Aid (VGWA) provides information, support and temporary emergency accommodation to women and children who are experiencing domestic abuse. The VGWA aims to promote self-help enabling women to make their own decisions and to gain confident and develop independence from their abusers.

It is part of a national umbrella organisation with a membership of 34 local groups situated throughout Wales. The central organisation campaigns and lobbies at the national and international level on issues relating to domestic abuse. However, they have no management or audit role in local groups.

### **Drop-in Facility**

The VGWA is based on Holton Road in Barry. From this centre they provide a drop in facility where anyone experiencing domestic abuse can obtain help and support between 10am-3pm Mondays to Fridays. The service provides information, advocacy and support in obtaining welfare benefits, legal advice, housing advice, tenancy advice and information, access to medical treatment, parenting skills, nutritional advice, health and safety advice etc.

A 24-hour help line is also run 365 days of the year. VGWA also seek to raise awareness of domestic abuse issues in the community through education, training, publicity and liaison with other agencies. One example is the Freedom Programme, which aims to provide an opportunity for women to develop ways of thinking and behaving to protect themselves and their children from harm. Women hopefully leave the programme with increased confidence, assertiveness and self-esteem and with the ability to identify abusive partners in the early stages of a relationship.

### **Refuge Accommodation**

Across the whole of the Vale of Glamorgan there is only one direct access refuge, which is operated by Women's Aid which has 5 beds available – providing accommodation for up to 5 families at any one time plus an emergency bed settee. Each family has a bedroom, which can sleep up to four people; bathrooms, a lounge and kitchen are all shared. If a woman enters the refuge and does not qualify for housing benefit then they have to pay a weekly charge for their accommodation.

The property is owned by the United Welsh Housing Association and the VGWA is the managing partner. The refuge provides temporary, emergency housing for women and their children escaping domestic abuse and provides a safe space where they can get the help and support they need in order to make decisions about their future. However, the accommodation is made

available to a woman for as long as she needs it, be that 24 hours or several months.

Women's Aid are also able to find refuge accommodation outside of the area to place women who would not feel safe remaining local area and conversely, women from outside of the Vale can be housed in the refuge in Barry. Women are able to go anywhere across the UK. However, spaces are limited in refuges right across the country.

Women's Aid service monitoring and evaluation statistics for the period April 2005 to March 2006 showed the following:

The number of requests for emergency temporary accommodation and source.

Source of Request	Number of requests
Support Unit	40
Telephone Calls	35
Out of hours emergency helpline	12
Total Number of Requests	87

Number of women and children accommodated.

Accommodation	Number
Women accommodated in Vale Refuge	38
Children accommodated in Vale Refuge	39
Women accommodated in other WA Refuge	11
Women returned home	5
Number of homeless appointments attended	38

Figures for 2004/05 show a drastic decrease in refuge tenants. Many tenants have had to stay in the refuge for several months, sometimes over a year waiting to be re-housed. This prevents other emergency needs being met.

VGWA have identified a need for a second stage refuge, which would benefit women, and children who are no longer at the emergency or crisis stage but are waiting to be rehoused. The aim being that the rooms would be more self contained with own kitchen facilities etc, it would be specifically for women who have been through the direct access refuge. A second stage refuge would lift the burden on the direct access refuge, which would then hopefully become what it was initially intended to be, emergency temporary accommodation.

In a report compiled by the Welsh Assembly Government on domestic abuse<sup>4</sup>, it was recommended that there should be at least 1 family unit per 10,000 population in each local authority. In the Vale of Glamorgan, this would equate to 12 bed spaces as a minimum, whereas currently there are only 5 with shared facilities.

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<sup>4</sup> Funding Women's Aid Services, Nicki Charles, 1991

Recently, this Scrutiny Committee commissioned a review to look at the Homelessness Strategy and the gaps between the Council's policy and the Welsh Assembly Guidance. As part of this review a meeting was held with Mr R Kennedy, Director of Housing, YMCA Wales. He confirmed that capital grants are available from the YMCA to part fund such projects, such as a second stage refuge in the Vale of Glamorgan. However, the Council is currently not in a position to access these funds due to the need for subsequent revenue funding.

### **Outreach Services**

VGWA also provides outreach services. Outreach enables support and advice to be made available if the female client is unable to get to the information centre or refuge. The outreach worker will meet a woman at any location where they feel safe and comfortable to talk and provide confidential information, help and support. An outreach worker will help a victim to access what ever services they require in their particular circumstances, including housing, benefits, educational support, solicitors, police services. However they will not pressurise anyone to take any particular course of action, the final decisions are down to freedom of choice on the part of the victim.

### **Funding**

There has been a Partnership Agreement, or Service Level Agreement (SLA) in place between the VGWA and the Vale of Glamorgan Council for the last three years. Problems have arisen at times due to changes in or problems in management within Women's Aid. The Council is currently not represented on the VGWA Management Board; ideally there should be representation by an officer and an elected Member.

The last SLA expired on 31 March 2006 and was then extended for a further 6 months. During this time a revised and updated contract for the provision of services and supporting specification was drafted in consultation with various Council services involved with VGWA. At the time of writing this report, this revised contract had not been signed, but it provides a comprehensive and clear specification of all services that must be made available in return for a contract price for 2006/07 of £101,000. This funding is currently under review as part of the options to address the deficit within Community Services.

In addition, under Supporting People the refuge receives a grant of £88,505 direct from the Assembly.

The VGWA is also a service provider for the Council's Tenant Support Scheme (TESS) and in order to do so, they receive additional funding by the Council's Supported People Revenue Grant. Between April 2004 and March 2005, the scheme supported 21 women with 30 children; each family had different support needs. Currently, Supporting People is funding outreach support for 8 people through the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Tenancy Support Scheme (TESS) at a cost of £32,110 per annum. As this is through TESS it can only be provided to support those placed in accommodation by the Council.

R16 A protocol be considered for adoption for incorporation into a Service Level Agreement with Women's Aid for the provision of time limited support for women and their children to enable independence.

### **VGWA Business Plan 2006-2009**

The VWGA Business Plan outlines how the organisation intends to continue to provide an efficient service, this includes looking at possible new sponsorship/funding to endeavour to expand their services. Proposals for future developments include the following:

Aim	Objective	Funding	Deadline
New premises for VGWA Support Unit	Suitable size and location for staff, visitors, expansion of services	Existing funders	August 2007
Appoint Funding co-ordinator	To increase funding opportunities	Existing funders and national charities	March 2007
VGWA Charity Shop	To increase funding opportunities and raise awareness	Self supporting	August 2007
Additional out reach worker	To provide support to those unable to access the support unit	Existing funders	November 2006
Second stage refuge	To provide additional accommodation	Lobbying existing funders	January 2007
Appoint Child worker	To develop children's self esteem, confidence and communication skills	National and local charities	January 2007

In light of the uncertainty surrounding future funding that all voluntary bodies are experiencing, Women's Aid need to pursue future developments with these constraints in mind and to continue to seek alternative funding channels.

#### **2.4 Cymdeithas Tai Hafan**

Cymdeithas Tai Hafan was established over 15 years ago from Women's Aid in Carmarthen. There was a recognised need for on-going support for women who are leaving a refuge, as a result Tai Hafan began as a housing association providing this specialist support on a time limited basis for women who have experienced domestic abuse. They now own housing throughout Wales, usually in pockets of 5 properties providing intensive time limited support. At present Tai Hafan do not have any properties or bed space within the Vale.

Tai Hafan have been established in the Vale for over 3 years and have a contract to provide floating support to 22 women funded through Supporting People monies. At present Tai Hafan within the Vale can only accept referrals made via Supporting People and the Women's Aid refuge due to resource constraints on the funding. A contract was recently agreed in April 2006 for Tai Hafan to extend its services into Cardiff where it now has access to 35 beds and the provision of floating support.

In the Vale 3 support workers are employed, 2 full time and 1 part time. The Cardiff contract has brought with it the benefit of 4 additional project workers as well as an administrative support assistant, which makes providing support within the Vale flexible and transferable in times of need.

The level of support provided to the client is time-limited for a period of two years as specified by the Welsh Assembly Government guidance. Clients are initially interviewed to identify their needs; these needs are then translated into goals and built into support plans tailored to the individual. Each goal within the support plan has target dates attached so that support will discontinue after 2 years. The Council has however now reconfigured part of the TESS to provide 33 lower level ongoing support packages, which can be provided indefinitely for those clients who are unable to reach full independence by the 2 year time frame.

Tai Hafan provide holistic support, signposting to other agencies as well as helping the client to find and locate move-on accommodation, or providing support to stay within their own homes and remain safe. The aim is to provide support tailored to each woman and her children in order to get back to living independently.

Currently under the Supporting People funding Cymdeithas Tai Hafan provides the following level of support:

Level of support	Number of clients	Cost per week per client
1-3 hours	4	£36.50
3-5 hours	18	£83.00

Levels of contracted support have increased from 1 support worker for every four clients to one for every ten; this is as a result of two funding reductions. This has significantly decreased contact time that a client has with her support worker to between 1-5 hours per week. The needs of the client have not changed but the reduction in funding has forced the support level to change. To try and counter balance this the support workers will utilise other agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau wherever possible. This reduction in the level of support is characteristic across the whole of Wales, not just the Vale. The exceptions are Merthyr Tydfil and Swansea where it is still possible to provide 1 support worker for every 4 clients.

Tai Hafan provide regular monitoring and data reports to the Council via Supporting People and they are also audited by the Welsh Assembly Government.

## 2.5 The Legal System

### The Court System

Currently cases are heard at Barry Magistrates Court where the victim can request special measures. This means that she is able to access the building through a separate door and wait in a different area of the building so that she does not have contact with the perpetrator or their family prior to or after the hearing. The Courts have recently started to try and cluster cases when there

is a sufficient number being heard. However under the current review of the Court System it is anticipated that Barry Courts will be closing in September 2007, all cases will then be heard in either Bridgend or Cardiff.

In Cardiff, there is now a specialist domestic abuse court operating, with fast track procedures available in both Magistrates' and Crown Courts, with all cases being held on the same day, which helps to ensure consistency in sentencing. This also enables the Women's Safety Unit in Cardiff to liaise closely with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in all cases where a criminal charge has been made and provides advocacy to all survivors who decide to participate in the criminal prosecution of their partners. Bridgend has also recently been awarded specialist court status and should be up and running by Spring 2007.

A specialist domestic abuse court aims to offer better support and care to the victim and to ensure that perpetrators are held to account. Central government aims to expand the number of such courts from 25 to more than 50, after Home Office research showed that existing courts are having a real impact on prosecutions and convictions. The CPS statistics show that the percentage of cases ending in convictions in specialist courts is on average 71% compared to 59% in standard courts.

Specialist domestic abuse courts use a combined approach bringing together police, crown prosecutors, magistrates and the probation service as well as working with victim support. They offer

- Dedicated prosecutors, police and magistrates, as well as legal advisors with extensive knowledge of domestic abuse crimes
- Fast tracking of cases, ensuring they move quickly through the court system, limiting the likelihood of further incidents
- Separate entrances, exits and waiting areas so that victims do not come into contact with the perpetrators.

Having specialist court status enables access to additional Home Office funding to train independent dedicated advisors to be based in the court itself.

Whilst concerns have been expressed about Barry Courts closing and the need to travel to other courts, these concerns can be countered by the fact that it will now be specialist domestic abuse courts hearing cases from the Vale. In addition there is a joint initiative between the police and the CPS called 'Witness Care' which provides the practical support needed to help victims attend court, they will meet the costs and arrange travel such as taxis and also child care.

R1 Barry Court be encouraged to apply for specialist Domestic Abuse status and that practitioners ensure that all victims are aware of the practical assistance they can access via the Witness Care Scheme.

### **The Police Service**

The measures in the Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004 enable the police in England and Wales to make an arrest without warrant where common assault has taken place. It is now the CPS who decides whether to proceed with a prosecution or not. However, the police feel that the CPS are

reluctant to proceed with cases where the victim does not wish to give evidence as they have their own performance targets to achieve and the chances of success are obviously reduced in such cases and this would have a detrimental impact upon their statistics.

Within the Vale of Glamorgan, there is a specialist police team, (Domestic Abuse Unit - DAU) based at a designated unit at Barry Island, as opposed to within a police station. This unit was established in 1997 and provides assistance, support and acts as a monitoring centre, helping to promote awareness of domestic abuse throughout the police within the Vale of Glamorgan. Whenever a police officer attends a domestic incident a standard risk assessment form (FSU 9) is completed and sent into the DAU. The DAU will assess whether or not the case is high risk based on risk indicators on the form and the course of action taken is dependent on the level of risk. Low risk cases would receive a letter making the victim aware of the unit and assistance that is available to them, whilst high risk would ideally receive a home visit.

The officers within the DAU have established good links with other agencies and also with other police units, so that if a person moved into the area with a history of domestic abuse they would be sent the case records.

The number of domestic abuse incidents reported has increased steadily over the last three years from in the region of 110-120 referrals per month to 160. Part of this may be the greater awareness amongst the public, together with the Police taking a more serious approach to incidents of domestic abuse.

The Police are able to 'flag up' a high-risk address. This includes regular police surveillance of the property whereby they drive past regularly to check everything is ok.

### **MARACS**

South Wales Police have developed a sharing of information protocol on cases of domestic abuse, which includes risk assessments on victims in all cases. A tool developed by the Cardiff Women's Safety Unit (WSU) recommended that all very high risk cases are referred to a MARAC (multi agency risk assessment conference) where information is shared and a multi agency action plan formulated aimed at protecting the victim and any children.

The MARACs are held fortnightly, due to the high volume of cases. They are organised and facilitated by the DAU at Barry Island and chaired by their Detective Inspector. These meetings have been significant in providing multi agency protective packages for high-risk victims and for the effective sharing of information between agencies. Several representatives from relevant Council departments attend the MARAC, including Housing, Children's Services and Education Welfare. It is also the intention that the newly appointed Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator will also attend these MARACs on a regular basis.

### **The Probation Service**

The Probation Service run courses that perpetrators can attend once they have been convicted, these courses are aimed at changing patterns of

behaviour. If the offender fails to attend the full course then they are referred back to the courts for sentencing. A Community Punishment Order can contain various different clauses such as attendance on such a programme. Courts are generally trying more and more to assist the perpetrators and look at programs to alter behaviour and attitudes to abuse. There has recently been a new course introduced for perpetrators - the Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP). The programme has only been in operation within the Vale of Glamorgan for a few months so it is too soon to comment on its success.

## 2.6 The Health Service

The Home Office has produced a paper for health care professionals<sup>5</sup> which is available on their website. The aim of this report is to raise awareness of the scale of the health problem represented by domestic abuse and to alert health professionals to the contribution they can make to tackling this issue. The report explains how health professionals can make an important contribution under three key areas;

- by asking women directly about whether they have experienced abuse
- by enabling women to access specialised services and
- by supporting them in changing their situation.

Reports show that 60% of violence starts during pregnancy; in Wales NHS resources have been targeted into training and raising awareness with midwives. A Care Pathway initiative began in April 2006 within the midwifery service to raise awareness and detection of domestic abuse during pregnancy. Midwives have been trained to recognise indicators of abuse and to ask a series of questions in order to detect problems. The effectiveness of this project is yet to be fully evaluated.

Accident & Emergency Departments have traditionally sent notes of attendance to a patient's GP, often they are then just filed as a result patterns of injuries are often not picked up. However, due to the success of the Care Pathway in anti natal care there is now the intention to roll out a similar initiative in A&E departments across Wales. WAG has seconded a nurse to implement this new initiative nationally.

Nurses and midwives are trained to recognise symptoms of domestic abuse. In Cardiff the Women's Safety Unit (WSU) funded an innovative three-year project whereby a senior nurse will specialise in domestic abuse cases based in the A&E department of the University Hospital Wales, referring cases directly to the WSU. Although the post is funded by the WSU, the specialist domestic abuse nurse also picks up domestic abuse referrals from the Vale of Glamorgan.

The aim of the project is to try and reduce repeat attendance – a positive outcome from the hospitals point of view. The actual outcome is a referral to community based support services and this is being achieved successfully. Prior to this nurse being in post there were on average 4 referrals made per

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<sup>5</sup> Tackling Domestic Violence: the role of health professionals.

quarter, since she has been in post there have been approximately 40 referrals per quarter, of which 20-25 have also related to child protection. Previously such cases would have been missed. The WSU is currently commissioning an evaluation of the project, as it is has now been in operation for 18months.

## **2.7 Vale of Glamorgan Council**

Across the Council there are several different departments who have either direct or indirect involvement with families experiencing domestic abuse. These include:

- Housing,
- Children and Family Services,
- Education,
- Community Care and Health,
- Youth Offending Team and
- Community Safety.

Within these service areas there are numerous partnerships and projects that impact on these families and the services they receive from the Council.

Some of the key services the Council offers to provide support and advice to victims of domestic abuse are outlined below. It should always be remembered that from the perspective of external agencies or members of the community the Council is generally viewed as a whole body not separate service providers, therefore if they are receiving services from several departments then they expect these services areas to work together and to share information.

### **The Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator**

In 2004/05 the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) first allocated a sum of £25,000 to each Welsh authority, to be used towards the salary and training costs to engage a local Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator, primarily to take forward recommendations arising from the WAG document '*Tackling Domestic Abuse: The All Wales National Strategy*'.

In the Vale of Glamorgan, the position was advertised on scale point 5 and a co-ordinator was appointed, but unfortunately this person only stayed in post for 7 months. The main reason given for leaving was the low salary offered. The Domestic Abuse Forum was established in 2000 and continued to meet to discuss Vale-wide domestic abuse issues despite not having a co-ordinator in post. The funding was guaranteed for 2005/06, but was not initially guaranteed for 2006/07. However, on 19th July 2006 a report to Cabinet confirmed that the grant had been awarded to the Safer Vale Partnership in order to employ a DA Co-ordinator until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007. The same report included the following funding allocation –

Ref	Project Title	Amount Requested		Amount to be allocated	
		Capital £	Revenue £	Building Safer Communities	Safer Communities
DA/1	Uplift to increase the salary of the DA co-ordinator.		10,000	10,000	
	DA Publicity		1,500	1,500	
	DA Building Work		2,500	2,500	
DA/2	DA Outreach Worker to access the rural areas of the Vale. Currently awaiting Welsh Assembly confirmation.		23,000		23,000

The publicity is to promote services available following the various training completed by members of the forum over the last year. The grant for building works related to a request from the Colcot Centre to convert a laundry area into a downstairs toilet and baby changing facility, however as permission has not yet been received from the Police, who own the property this may no longer be proceeding.

The bid for an outreach worker in the rural Vale was subsequently rejected by WAG as they said that the bid did not fit the appropriate profile for that allocation.

In April this year, the Welsh Assembly government wrote to all authorities confirming that each had been allocated £26,000 for the 2006-07 financial year and that this funding was secured until 2008-09. This allocation was ring fenced for the salary costs relating to a Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator. The money is payable every six months and cannot be claimed whilst there is no one in post, so the longer the position is vacant the more money that will be lost. At the time of writing this report six months funding had been lost due to the lack of a co-ordinator in post.

### **External Reviews of the Role of the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator**

In May 2005, the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator for Pembrokeshire visited the Vale to complete a brief peer review to consider the role of the Domestic Abuse Forum (DAF), the role of the co-ordinator and service gaps. The report was not comprehensive, but it did make the following observations:

- The DAF was a stand-alone organisation with no strategic role, governed by its own constitution that has no strategic planning lead.
- Domestic abuse is a huge problem for Children's services and a more structured multi agency partnership needs to be developed between the DAF and the Area Child Protection Committee (Safe Guarding Children Boards).
- The DA co-ordinator's job description was too long and the salary offered too low.
- The role of co-ordinator will be of paramount importance to the success of the restructure and the job description needs to reflect the tasks to be achieved as well as having clear responsibilities and line management.

- The Co-ordinators work needs to be directed by the DAF itself.
- In the time available it had been impossible to look at the current service level or identify gaps, although it was apparent that not all members of the DAF had had specific domestic abuse training. All forum members should have a good understanding of the complex issues faced by those experiencing domestic abuse and understand how they in their role could respond and how the decisions of the forum will impact on service users.
- A sea change is required in the workings of the forum and all agencies represented need to pull together to achieve common goals and that should be to have victim focused policies and procedures.

The following recommendations were made:

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Current Position</b>
1	That the DAF becomes a sub committee of the Community Safety Partnership and that the Community Safety Officer attends all forum meetings and the sub committee reports back to the Partnership.	The forum is technically a sub group of the Community Safety Partnership however there is no communication or reporting between the two groups.
2	The DA Co-ordinator attends the Community Safety Partnership.	There is currently no co-ordinator in post, nor has there been for over 18 months. Interviews were held on the 17 <sup>th</sup> and 20 <sup>th</sup> October 2006 and a co-ordinator appointed.
3	Either the DA Co-ordinator becomes an active member of the Area Child Protection Committee ACPC (now the Local Safeguarding Children Board-LSCB) or a representative from the ACPC (LSCB) attends the DAF.	The Chair of the DAF sits on the ACPC (now LSCB). Subject to planned additional capacity within the Council's Child Protection Unit being in place, the Council's Principal Officer for Child Protection will provide the line management for the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator.
4	All ACPC (now LSCB) training event include domestic abuse.	Domestic Abuse training is included in 2005/06 Level ii ACPC (now LSCB) training programme.
5	A review of the membership of the DAF is carried out to ensure all services, both statutory and voluntary that work with victims, perpetrators and children of domestic abuse are represented.	This has not taken place.
6	The DAF should prepare a Business plan in line with the Community Safety Five year plan. From this an action plan needs to be drawn up giving the co-ordinator and forum focus, direction, objectives and timely outcomes, with clear lines of responsibility for individual actions.	There is no business plan, strategy or action plan in place for the DAF.
7	A steering group is established, with responsibility for directing the work of the co-ordinator.	A steering group has now been established with responsibility for appointing and directing the replacement co-ordinator.
8	Hold a multi agency training day for DAF members.	This has not taken place, although the Forum has taken forward awareness and perpetrator training amongst its

Ref	Recommendation	Current Position
9	<p>The co-ordinator should carry out certain key tasks, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A mapping exercise to look at existing service provision for those experiencing domestic abuse</li> <li>- Identification of gaps in service provision</li> <li>- Ensuring existing protocols, service level agreements and information sharing are working</li> <li>- Training needs analysis across all statutory and voluntary sector organisations.</li> </ul>	<p>members.</p> <p>These tasks have not been taken forward because no co-ordinator has been in post. However, a lot of this information has been acquired through this review and can inform the planning work of the co-ordinator once in post.</p>

Following the findings of this peer review, a report went to the Safer Vale Community Safety Partnership in August 2005 that recommended that as there was no one in post, the WAG funding be utilised to appoint a consultant to:

- Collate strategies from all Wales National Strategy, the findings of the Vale of Glamorgan Domestic Abuse Conference, the Local Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy.
- Map existing services and initiatives and identify gaps in service provision.
- Develop joint agency objectives and action plans.
- Ensure existing protocols, service level agreements and information-sharing systems are working.
- Identify training needs analysis across all statutory and voluntary sectors and identification of suitable training.

It was also agreed that provided WAG funding was secured for 2006/07, the post would be enhanced by £10,000 through contributions from partnership agencies and departments of the Council, and that the Domestic Abuse Forum becomes a working group under the Safer Vale Community Safety Partnership.

Further to this report, 3 tenders were received, however the only tender that met the requirements of the brief in relation to content and experience exceeded the funding available. The preferred tender did itemise areas of work that could be undertaken separately. It was therefore proposed that the consultant be required to undertake the following:

- Provide assistance with the recruitment to the DA post, including assistance with producing the job description and person specification.
- Monitoring and development of the new post holder.

This meeting of the Safer Vale Statutory Partners meeting, held in December 2005 also agreed that in order to appoint a co-ordinator at the earliest opportunity there was a need for the statutory partners to underwrite the full costs of the post for up to 3 years and the salary be increased by £10,000.

The consultant's report on the recruitment and support of a domestic violence co-ordinator was subsequently received in May 2006. This report concurs with many of the findings of this review including the following:

- There is no evidence of a strategic direction or plan to tackle domestic abuse within the Vale of Glamorgan. A stand alone strategy and action plan should be developed, which focuses on the safety of the survivor and

- management of the perpetrator and the successful role out of clear strategic aims within the community safety partnership.
- A domestic abuse co-ordinator is needed to co-ordinate the agencies, partnerships and organisations involved in domestic abuse in the Vale and manage complex relationships.
  - The Council should increase the availability of outreach services for survivors, making such a service outcome focused. Lack of outreach provision prevents community domestic abuse services being as effective as they could be.
  - There is a need to improve the services available for children who have witnessed or experienced domestic abuse.
  - There is a need to take a planned and expert approach to the development of any perpetrator programme and ensure that any such programme is part of a strategic approach and has been assessed and accredited.

As a result of this report a steering group was established consisting off Superintendent Sue Hayes, Tony Young (Head of Children Services), Alun Billinghurst (Acting Head of Housing and Community Safety), Cllr Alexander (formerly the Chair of the DAF) and Antonia Bridges (Vice Chair of the DAF and Sure Start Co-ordinator) to provide a strategic overview for the co-ordinator role.

This steering group made the decision to proceed with the advertisement for the post of Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator at a scale point 31-33 (£24,708 - £26,187). The advertisement was placed on the 10<sup>th</sup> August (closing date for applicants – 24<sup>th</sup> August). The advert stated that funding for the post was secured until 31 March 2007, although likely to continue. It also emphasised that the post will play a key role in driving forward change, including developing a domestic abuse strategy and co-ordinating the implementation of an action plan.

Interviews were held on 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> October 2006 and a candidate appointed on .

R2 An appropriate representative is sought from the Local Health Board to attend the Domestic Abuse Forum Steering Group to further promote joined up working at a strategic level.

### **The Domestic Abuse Forum**

The Forum was established in 2002, it was formed by a constitution which states that its' objective is –

*'to bring together all organisations operating or hoping to operate in the Vale Of Glamorgan, working in areas connected with Domestic Abuse and to strive to continue the development of a multi-agency strategy.'*

This strategy has still not been developed.

Under the constitution the aims are:

1. To promote and maintain joint action and co-operation.
2. To increase awareness of domestic abuse in the community and across agencies.
3. To express the views of the Forum to the Local Authority, Health Authority, Departments of Government and other appropriate bodies.
4. To improve services and responses to women and children who have, or are experiencing domestic abuse.
5. To take positive action against perpetrators of domestic abuse.
6. To support the development of initiatives working with perpetrators.
7. To measure and monitor the extent and nature of domestic abuse in the Vale of Glamorgan.
8. To do all such other lawful things as are incidental or conducive to the attainment of the above objects or any of them.

Membership of the Forum is open to any organisation operating or hoping to operate in the Vale of Glamorgan concerned with domestic abuse. The Forum is now a sub group of the Community Safety Partnership, however there is no representative from the partnership sitting on the forum or vice versa and no communication or copying of minutes between the two. The forum meets every other month and full minutes are taken. Cllr Alexander, was the only elected member who attended, as chair of the Forum. She has since resigned as Chair of the forum, leaving no elected member representation on the group.

There have been various sub groups set up to look at particular issues such as training and responding to the Welsh Assembly Government Strategic Framework. This latter group submitted a paper to the Assembly on behalf of the forum, stating that they believe that a 'one stop shop' would be inappropriate and an outreach holistic model would more readily meet the needs of the rural and urban communities within the Vale. This approach would aim to be a proactive rather than reactive service.

The Forum does not have any strategic plans or action plans and whilst it is well attended whilst there has been no Co-ordinator in post it has suffered from a lack of direction and disagreement on priorities. The lack of a permanent Co-ordinator has also had a detrimental effect on the Forum as there have been several seminars, training courses, networking and information sharing events that the Vale has not been able to attend and has therefore missed out on developing new practices and also on identifying potential alternative funding opportunities and innovative ideas.

Ideally the Forum would have a strategy and action plan linked to delivering the targets in the Community Safety Partnership. These actions could be grouped into themes and a sub group of the Forum established for each theme, tasked with the responsibility of delivering those actions and reporting back to the Forum.

R3 A review be carried out on the membership of the Domestic Abuse Forum to ensure that all services, both statutory and voluntary, working with victims, perpetrators and children of domestic abuse are represented. Council departments should not be over represented on the Forum.

## The South Wales Domestic Abuse Forum

The aims of the forum are

- To establish appropriate and motivated membership to enable the South Wales Domestic abuse Forum to:
- Provide a strategic and co-ordinated approach to tackling domestic abuse in South Wales
- Promote a positive and effective response to domestic abuse across all the voluntary and statutory agencies.

This South Wales Forum is intended to be a Strategic rather than operational group, who meet quarterly and are chaired by Julie Morgan AM. The Vale is represented by the Director of Community Services and the Chair of the Domestic Abuse Forum.

The Council has also signed up to a revised South Wales Domestic Abuse Sharing of Information Protocol, which was endorsed by the Community Well-Being and Safety Scrutiny Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2006. This protocol should help to enable all parties to support victims of domestic abuse in a more co-ordinated manner.

### **Vale of Glamorgan Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy 2005-08**

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 placed a statutory duty on all local authorities to work in partnership with the police, other key agencies and the community, to prepare and publish an audit of crime and disorder and from this research to develop and implement a three year strategy for reducing crime and disorder in their areas.

In the Vale of Glamorgan, the audit highlighted seven key areas that were identified for further strategic action; one of these key areas was domestic abuse. The Community Safety Partnership identified objectives and actions for each of the ten key themes. In relation to domestic abuse the following was included:

#### To target domestic abuse

The partnership are committed to tackling this crime and actions to address domestic abuse will include a co-ordinated agency approach to domestic abuse awareness training, running an awareness raising campaign and the sharing of best practice.

#### Strategic Statement

- To work in partnership to reduce domestic abuse
- To work towards achieving the national PSA1 target, to reduce crime in the Vale of Glamorgan by 15% over the next three years.
- To use the Prolific and Priority Offender Scheme (PPOS) to target and arrest offenders and through intervention reduce re-offending.
- To ensure that children are protected from significant harm arising from domestic abuse and to minimise their exposure to domestic abuse by enabling early and effective assessment of their needs wherever

- appropriate.
- To target and arrest offenders and through intervention reduce re-offending.
  - To provide advice and support to victims and witnesses of this form of behaviour.
  - To reduce this form of behaviour against vulnerable groups and the fear experienced by such groups, by education, positive press and proactive crime prevention.

The Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy will be delivered through a multi-agency partnership effort. The intention is that the strategic aims, as identified above will be further developed over the lifespan of the audit, in conjunction with strategies prepared by other agencies involved in the partnership.

Action plans with SMART targets are to be developed to deliver the strategic priorities; specially constituted task groups have been established to implement these plans. In relation to domestic abuse it is the existing Domestic Abuse Forum that has been identified as the most appropriate task group to take forward these objectives and draw up an action plan for delivery. However this has not progressed since the Crime and Disorder Strategy was written and there is limited communication between the DAF and the Community Safety Partnership.

Due to the considerable degree of overlap and common issues between many of the task groups, ideally there should also be representation from the DAF on other groups, in particular the Substance Misuse action team.

The DAF should put together an action plan to support any funding bids they put to the CSP and also supporting evidence including high level outcome based performance indicators to illustrate the effect of services provided and the potential impact on service users if levels of service are not maintained. There are monies available through the Community Safety Partnership that the DAF could bid for, which to date they have not therefore opportunities are being missed.

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| R4 | Appropriate lines of communication and reporting links are established between the DAF and the Community Safety Partnership.   |
| R5 | A Local Domestic Abuse Strategy and supporting action plan be prepared and implemented and that this is must aligned to the Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy, the annual Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and the Area Adult Protection Committee (AAPC) Business Plans. The local strategy needs to be realistic and focused on agreed priorities for the Vale of Glamorgan. |
| R6 | A set of outcome based performance indicators are developed to measure progress in the delivery of the agreed action plan. These should be regularly reported to the Health Social Care and Well-being Partnership, Community Safety Partnership, the LSCB and AAPC and include the monitoring of survivor feedback.   |

## **Supporting People**

The introduction of Supporting People in Wales in 2003 established a new funding framework for the provision of accommodation based support to vulnerable people. Supporting People amalgamated a diverse range of revenue funding streams; this produced a unified funding stream to support a range of client groups including women escaping domestic abuse. The aim is for less dependence on institutions with the predominance of more independence. This encourages a greater emphasis on people staying in their own homes.

Supporting People is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the schemes and for commissioning new services. However, due to Government budget cuts new schemes are unlikely. Annually these schemes are evaluated to ensure that each is still needed and that it is achieving its agreed aims and outcomes. There is a multi agency planning group who regularly meet throughout the year to review data on each client group. The Supporting People Co-ordinator seeks information from agencies involved in tackling and preventing domestic abuse across the Vale in order to put the supporting people data to the planning group.

In relation to Domestic Abuse the scheme provides funding through two providers, Women's Aid and Cymdeithas Tai Hafan, both relate to floating support. Funding is provided via a contract.

The Supporting People Operational Plan uses the Welsh Assembly Government Individual Needs Assessment Module (INAM) to identify core areas for significant support. The Supporting People Partnership makes decisions on which services to prioritise for development assessed to address those areas with the greatest unmet need identified by the INAM framework and other needs information that is available.

In the 2005/06 – 2006/07 Operational Plan, the result of this needs analysis identified 26 new priorities in order of need determined by the Supporting People Planning Group. In relation to domestic abuse three priorities were identified (the number as the position out of 26):

- (1) 5 direct access family units (self contained) second stage refuge for Women who have experienced domestic abuse.
- (2) 7 direct access additional domestic abuse refuge units for women. This would increase the existing refuge availability to 12 from 5.
- (17) 10 new floating support units for women who have experienced domestic abuse across all tenures, including support with children.

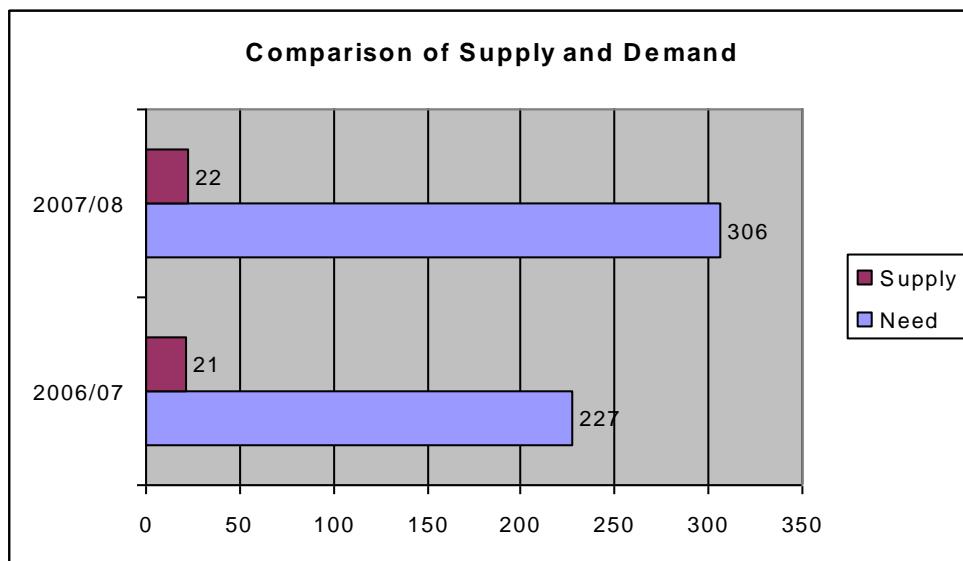
These priorities are in reality only a wish list as they will only be met if either the Welsh Assembly Government makes available new funding or if any existing projects are identified as no longer needed or meeting their objectives. Therefore unfortunately none of these projects were able to proceed.

In the 2006/07 – 2007/08 Operational Plan the same process was applied, bids were prioritised based on the level of unmet need identified and the data

supplied by experts working with each client group. However, in relation to domestic abuse, this time the priorities (and ranking out of 15) were:

- (6) 5 units second stage refuge accommodation.
- (15) 10 units of outreach floating support across all tenures. This scheme was given the lowest priority because of the constraints on the Supporting People budget and the Planning Group felt that alternative funding channels for this type of project had not been fully explored.

The following chart shows the comparison between the identified demand and needs for the two Operational Plans.



This clearly shows that demand had increased and supply had remained fairly static. However the Planning Group felt that due to the lack of direction and agreement in the Domestic Abuse Forum on the key priority for tackling domestic abuse in the Vale, together with the failure to access alternative funding streams the priority rating for domestic abuse actions had to be reduced.

### **The Colcot Project**

The Colcot Community Project is a registered charity managed by Sure Start and based within an old police house in Gibbonsdown. It is an open access drop-in centre that is available to residents of the Vale who have experienced domestic abuse. The Community Project has established groups and workshops to respond to identify domestic abuse needs. For example, the Changing Pattern Group which is a rolling programme designed to help women change their pattern of behaviour and identify the signs of a potentially abusive relationship.

Colcot is predominantly an open access drop in centre but also provides counselling services to those who have experienced domestic abuse. Three to four years ago when the management of the project changed, the opportunity was taken to make a fresh start and to find out what the local community wanted from the centre. At the time there was no clear strategic plan in place and research within the community highlighted the importance of the facility for those suffering domestic abuse, so they started to target their support and working specifically with groups of women in this category. The work focused on looking at drawing up safety plans including advocacy, child

protection issues, personal and home safety etc – the approach has always been very individual to the circumstances in each case.

At the time, the needs of the children was also highlighted and the centre started a joint mother and children's group, however after a short time this evolved into a group just to provide support to the children.

The Colcot Project has now moved into more group work and has been running a rolling programme of pattern changing courses. This is a model based on cognitive behaviour therapy. The work is in small groups of 4-6 women and is based around them recognising the situation they are in and deciding for themselves that they want to make changes and break out of the cycle of behaviour, often the first step is to acknowledge that what they have accepted up until then is not normal behaviour. The feedback from these groups has been very positive – the groups encourage women to share their experiences and feelings and to work through their individual issues.

Social services have referred women onto the course, as well as other agencies and those that hear from word of mouth – there is no advertising. No fees are charged and the centre does not generate any income.

The Colcot Project is a member of Respect Association. This organisation oversees the development of good practice in relation domestic abuse services across the UK and has been responsible for establishing a set of principles and minimum standards for service delivery.

It is the prime UK association to access information on perpetrator programmes delivered by the public, private and voluntary sectors. As an affiliated member of this organisation, the Colcot benefits from a number of resources including good practice models, information and advice for clients and a male referral helpline.

The centre also operates a counselling service on one half day per week. This is a free service that women are referred on to or can self-refer. Volunteers and outreach workers will provide one-to-one support and there is no limit set on this support and many women continue to contact the project for ongoing support for several years. Advice and support is always available.

During 2006, men could only access the Colcot Project for general advice and support; there were no equivalent activities or courses aimed at men as there are for their female counterparts. In 2007, the Colcot Project will be focusing its attention on developing services specifically for men and will be soon be piloting a male perpetrators programme in the Vale for the first time.

### **Community Care and Health – Vulnerable Adults.**

Victims of domestic abuse may also be vulnerable adults within the definition of the adult protection procedures. Where this is the case the police will notify social services accordingly. The broad definition of a vulnerable adult is:

*'a person who is 18 years of age or over and who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other*

*disability, age or illness and who is or may be unable to take care of him/herself, or unable to protect him/herself against significant harm or serious exploitation.'*

The Vulnerable Adults Co-ordinator has worked to raise the profile of vulnerable adults within the Domestic Abuse Forum, but they feel that it is also important that the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator, liaises closely with them to build upon and maintain these links.

When the police have concerns they will notify social services using a standard referral form (VA1), this form is used across the whole of South Wales and is used to evidence decision making by all statutory agencies. There is an initial vetting of new referrals, the concern is logged and a decision then made, based purely on the content of the referral form as to whether a unified assessment needs to be conducted. If necessary an adult protection case conference is held to put in place a protection strategy and action plan.

## **Housing**

Housing are often the last Council service to know whether domestic violence is taking place within the property, usually they will only find out when an address has been highlighted in the MARAC list which they receive fortnightly. Representatives of housing attend MARACs as they are effective information sharing opportunities that provide actual outcomes. The Housing officers seek to attend the Domestic Abuse Forum as often as possible.

If someone is fleeing domestic abuse and declares himself or herself as homeless then they automatically obtain Gold Band status under the Homes 4 You housing policy. However, there is no sub prioritisation within the band so the victim will have to continue to bid in the normal way for an appropriate property and there are cases where women have had to stay in a refuge or temporary accommodation for over a year whilst they bid for properties.

Each case is dealt with on its own merits and the housing officer will put together a file with as much supporting evidence as possible regarding the severity of the case. Other agencies have expressed differing views over their understanding of the merit of sending in letters of support. The housing officers have confirmed that these types of letter are useful and will be taken into account provided they do actually provide some additional independent and substantive evidence rather than just repeating the hearsay details.

Housing officers have to be alert to identifying genuine need and it has been known for a woman to claim she is homeless due to domestic abuse be re-housed and then to immediately move the abusive partner into the property. Evidence is needed to identify the level of risk – is it immediate danger of likely harm, or do they just want to be re-housed. The police domestic abuse unit are very good at information sharing and ensuring that the appropriate facts are known, which can be used as evidence of housing need. The police and other voluntary units, such as witness support have expressed some lack of understanding over housing policy and the role that they can play to support victims in their applications for housing.

There are general problems for all residents of the Vale who are registered as homeless due to the lack of housing stock available. At the time of meeting with the housing officers there were 30 vacant properties and 4,800 people on the waiting list.

Housing officers have in the past experienced problems in trying to contact women who have fled council properties and gone into a Women's Aid refuge, there was one case of a woman who had gone to a refuge in England, leaving the property in a rush leaving pets, food etc as it was; it took over a year to contact her and the property was obviously in a poor condition by that time. In the end the action of Women's Aid and the inability to contact or pass messages to the tenant meant that it probably cost her quite a lot of money, which if she had surrendered the tenancy more immediately could have been avoided

The Assembly Government will be introducing changes to housing legislation. These changes will initially effect all bed and breakfast accommodation, requiring them to meet a basic standard in order to be considered suitable to be used as temporary accommodation with effect from 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2007<sup>6</sup>. In relation to the Women's Aid refuge under part 3 of the order there is delay in implementation of changes to accommodation, as per Bed & Breakfast requirements, until 4 April 2011. This applies to all social housing schemes that are already being used to house homeless persons before 7 April 2008. Although a 3 year delay has been granted for transitional accommodation, it is essential that an assessment of the Women's Aid refuge is undertaken to identify the modifications required to meet the requirements of the order by 2011.

R7 Housing Services provide training on housing policy and the role of agencies to the Domestic Abuse Forum.

### **Children's Services**

As already outlined in the introduction to this report, there is a considerable body of research linking domestic abuse with detrimental affects upon children in the family, both short and long term.

Every time a police officer attends a domestic abuse incident and there are children in the family, or the woman is pregnant they will inform the Council's First Contact Team in Children and Family Service. There are two dedicated social workers that deal with families experiencing domestic abuse and they will then have to make the decision as to whether to take no action, send a contact letter or carry out an initial assessment. The First Contact Team is there to check the welfare of all of the children in the family under the Children Act 1989.

If an initial assessment is to be made then there are statutory time limits that come into effect. The allocated social worker will check the SWIFT system to see whether there is a history of involvement or contact with the family and will then write up a chronology. An initial visit is then carried out; unless there

<sup>6</sup> The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (Wales) Order 2006

are concerns over risks of serious harm to the children, they always try to work with the mother and signpost them to agencies that can help. At the end of the initial assessment, recommendations are made. This could involve contact with projects run by Sure Start, the Colcot Project or the NSPCC. Quite often the women will have been involved with social services themselves as a child.

Once the initial assessment has been completed and the recommendations made, this is the end of their involvement; cases can if appropriate be passed on to the long-term team to continue working with the family. There is no real support for the majority of cases that fall in the middle ground where the family has problems but they are not severe enough to warrant a case conference and recommendations are made but there is no follow up or ongoing support.

There are links between the Domestic Abuse Forum and the Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) now the Vale of Glamorgan Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB). The chair of the DAF sits on the ACPC (LSCB). Subject to planned additional capacity within the Council's Child Protection unit being in place, the Council's Principal Officer for Child Protection will provide line management for the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator. The current chairs of both the DAF and LSCB sit on the steering group that has been established to provide a strategic overview to the co-ordinators work, this will ensure that a joined up approach and profile of domestic abuse is encouraged across the council.

R8 The Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator explores all possible funding opportunities and initiatives to identify the feasibility of developing a dedicated counselling and support service for children who have suffered or witnessed domestic abuse.

### **Serious Case Reviews**

Area Child Protection Committees are required by the Welsh Assembly Government to conduct a Serious Case Review whenever a child dies and abuse and neglect is known or suspected to be a factor in the child's death.

Each agency is required to undertake a review of the actions of its own agency and professionals; this review is carried out by a senior manager/professional who had no direct involvement in the case. The 'agency review' is then drawn together by an externally appointed 'overview author' who then provides an independent report, findings and recommendations to the LSCB. The LSCB is then obliged to develop an interagency action plan to respond to each of the recommendations.

Previous cases have highlighted domestic abuse existing within the family as a contributor factor. Outcomes of reviews lead to action plans being developed and the appointment of a domestic abuse co-ordinator is highlighted as essential in preventing such cases.

R9 The Domestic Abuse Forum updates and republishes the Domestic Abuse information Directory booklet originally published by the Community Safety Partnership.

R10 That the recently formed steering group and the domestic abuse coordinator consider treating the LSCB action plans arising from serious case reviews as an urgent priority.

## **Education Welfare Services**

The Senior Education Welfare Officer has links with the Domestic Abuse Forum and the MARAC meetings. Information is then effectively fed back to the other Education Welfare Officers (EWO) through the regular team meeting system in place.

The senior officer is able to obtain details from the MARAC where families are experiencing difficulties and relate this to the children's behaviour within schools, he is able to say whether a child has already displayed behavioural or attendance problems.

Previously schools were not informed when problems were happening within a family. As a result of attending the MARACs the Senior EWO has developed a procedure whereby he obtained the authority to pass on the information on and drafted a standard letter which is sent confidentially to the Head Teacher, copied to the appropriate EWO for every child discussed at a MARAC. There is no set policy as to what the school does with this information, but at least they are aware of the background, which may explain problems being experienced within the school setting.

Each secondary school has a dedicated EWO, most are based on site and children are able to drop in and discuss any problems or concerns with them. Records are kept of any contact and the Senior EWO would be aware of this support if that child is subsequently discussed at a MARAC. Primary schools have one EWO for every two schools. The EWO can if appropriate refer a child to Social Services and will work closely with them.

The department has established a procedure whereby a file is opened even on pre-school children, even if the child is still a baby and this record is kept so that if behavioural problems are experienced once that child starts school there is a complete history of whether they had been subject of a MARAC in their formative years. However, by then they could have been witnessing or experiencing years of violence and abuse without any support.

As well as behavioural issues, truancy can often be linked to abuse at home, the child may be abused themselves and staying home until the bruises have disappeared or, especially with older children, they stay at home to try and protect the mother.

## **3 Findings**

### **3.1 Interviews**

As part of the review work, a series of interviews were held with officers in various Council departments that have contact with families who have experienced domestic abuse. Interviews were also held with other public and voluntary organisations to get their input into the services currently available

and to also identify service needs and gaps in delivery. A full list of the people interviewed is attached at Appendix B

When asked about weaknesses and potential areas for improvement, some of the key findings and recurring themes coming out of these interviews are detailed below, in no particular order.

- There is a lot of good work going on across the Vale by different organisations, but it is often in isolation of other activities, so the overall effectiveness is reduced.
- In the Vale, a woman could attend any number of A & E departments thereby avoiding being recognised as a regular victim of assault.
- There are currently only 5 emergency refuge beds available for the whole of the Vale; the demand far outstrips this provision.
- The Council has missed out on opportunities both for funding and knowledge sharing by not having a Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator in post for the last 18 months. This post is a strategic one which should pull together all of the parties and interests involved in tackling domestic abuse.
- Whilst the Women's Safety Unit in Cardiff is recognised as good practice, any services in the Vale need to reflect the geographical and rural nature of the area.
- Some concerns have been expressed about lack of referrals to Sure Start where young children are staying in the refuge.
- Many women do not have trust or confidence in the police and their approach to incidents.
- There have been incidents where there has been a lack of communication and co-ordination between the police and agencies that are supporting the victim.
- There is a need for a more co-ordinated approach across all agencies.
- The Domestic Abuse Forum is lacking a strategic direction and purpose with no co-ordinator in post. There is a need for a co-ordinator to drive forward the forum, to champion its cause around the Council and co-ordinate and raise the profile of the forum.
- There is a need to raise the profile of domestic abuse and highlight that it does not just affect young women with children, but all ages and genders. There are no specialist agencies to support men or the elderly. Age Concern Cymru does provide some support in the form of advocacy and counselling.
- Information bottlenecks can sometimes prevent information reaching all interested organisations and also within the Council between different departments involved with domestic abuse in some form.
- Successful multi agency working is key to tackling and preventing domestic abuse.

- The police DAU in Barry is under resourced, for example officers do not have access to transport, making visits to the rural Vale difficult.
- A large proportion of domestic abuse incidents are linked to alcohol and drugs, however there is no real relationship with specialist agencies providing support in these areas, such as the Newlands Project and Inroads.
- There are opportunities for the forum to be more innovative and access alternative sources of funding.
- No Cabinet Members have attended the Forum.
- There are inherent difficulties in obtaining referrals through the health service. There are several hospitals within easy access so patterns of injuries can be missed also; there are difficulties with obtaining information from health authorities.
- Funding for projects is often short term.
- Rurality in the Vale is an issue. There are difficulties with lack of transport and support services in the western Vale.
- There is no dedicated support or counselling for the children of a family, unless social services become involved, this leaves lots of children being expected to just carry on as normal whilst they are experiencing severe problems at home.
- Children are the innocent victims but often get forgotten by agencies that are supporting the victim.
- Bail conditions can appear to be inconsistent.
- The standard and quality of the police FSU9 forms can vary considerably depending upon the officer who completed the form.
- With Social Services, once the initial assessment has been completed, if the case is not proceeding to the long-term team, as the majority do not, they are unable to offer any ongoing supportive work.
- The DAF need to jointly agree on what is the priority for funding.
- Existing funding should be better targeted at the most appropriate and effective methods of support.
- Some key stakeholders have felt excluded from sub-groups and consultation exercises carried out within the DAF.
- There are no lines of communication between the Community Safety Partnership and the Domestic Abuse Forum.

## Service User Interviews

Individual service users were meet and interviewed at the Colcot Project. The officers involved in the review also attended the Women's Aid inaugural Survivors Forum and spoke to attendees there. The tables over the following pages provide confidential summaries of the experiences of women who have needed advice and support in order to deal with abusive relationships.

<b>Service User A:</b>	Women's Aid in Barry and Rhondda. Ongoing support from the Colcot Project and Sure Start.
<b>Service Rating:</b>	Women's Aid – 6 Colcot Project and Sure Start – 9

### Case Study

The Service user had experienced a domestic issue with a previous partner and been referred to Women's Aid immediately by her Health Visitor. Although she did visit them and they explained the various options available to her, at the time she felt that she did not need any further help.

However, this experience meant that when she did subsequently need help following incidents with a different partner she knew where to go and went straight to Women's Aid. She was offered refuge accommodation out of county, as the Barry refuge was full. She decided that she would rather wait until a space was available in Barry to avoid too much disruption to her children. At the time she was pregnant with her third child.

She had to wait six weeks for a place at Barry refuge. Her partner had left the shared home which was a privately rented property, his name was on the tenancy documents and she could not afford to take over the tenancy on her own. During this six-week period she had to sit and wait but was scared. She stayed in with the blinds closed in the hope that the perpetrator would not know whether she was in or not. On the night he left they had an argument and he smashed a window, a neighbour called the police but at the time she said she did not know who had caused the damage, so no police action was taken. The police attended a separate incident when he kicked the front door in when she was out.

The service user did not receive any contact from the police Domestic Abuse Unit, although she was passed their names and contact details by Women's Aid. In the Women's Aid refuge initially there a good level of support, everyone was really helpful and supportive including the other residents. She felt safe because there were other people around. However, there was a change of manager and the service user experienced some problems with the new manager. She felt that she was not particularly discrete and did not respect residents' confidentiality. She stayed in the Barry refuge for 9 months and was then asked to leave. This came as a surprise; she was called into the office and given a list of complaints, however this was the first she had been made aware of any problems.

Help was offered to either contact the Council for emergency housing or to try and place her with another refuge. The Council was only able to offer bed and breakfast accommodation in the Newport area and she did not want to take her children there, she had by now a new baby. They then phoned around other refuges and she was accepted by Rhondda Women's Aid and went to their refuge in Ferndale. She stayed here for a further 4 months. Whilst she was in Ferndale, there was no contact with the Barry Women's Aid.

She had registered on the Council housing list as soon as she moved into the Barry refuge and was granted Gold band status. Over the 13 months that she was in refuges she bid on at least one property every fortnight.

Once she had been allocated a property her support worker from Ferndale brought her back to Barry and telephoned the Vale's Women's Aid to enable her to receive outreach support. After not hearing anything, the service user telephoned them and was told that they had never received the request. She spoke to her support worker from Ferndale who confirmed that this was not the case.

Eventually Barry outreach did get in touch with her and asked what support she felt she needed, but at the time she felt able to cope so said none. They said that she could get in touch in the future if she needed to. She felt that he had had to cope on her own when she needed support so she would be able to cope now.

Since being independent she has received a lot of help and support from the Colcot Project. She has known about the project for at least five years through Sure Start. When she had her first child she had a Sure Start midwife and attended parenting classes. She met Rosie at one of the Sure Start drop in days and found out about the Pattern Changing Programme and decided to attend. It was a very small group and she found it very useful, and easy to talk. The course covered all the areas that she felt it needed to and she found it very supportive and confidence building.

At the Colcot Project she has also attended various other courses over the years, including computer courses, health and beauty and reflexology. Courses like this have all helped to build up her confidence.

Even though she is no longer subject to domestic abuse she still maintains contact with the Colcot Project and knows that there is always someone there for her to talk to. They ensure that they signpost her on to anything else that they think will be of benefit to her, she has attended Sure Start courses on coping with children etc. Although her need and contact has been reducing at her own pace she knows she can go there if she needs to.

The service user was only aware of Women's Aid through her health visitor and the Colcot Project through Sure Start. Therefore if you were not involved with people like these you may not be aware of everything that is available.

The main area for improvement from her experiences was the attitude of Women's Aid in Barry, she very much felt on her own as if everyone in the refuge was against her. This was at a time when she needed a lot of support and confidence building. At the time she was so low that she actually felt that staying in an abusive relationship and putting up with occasional violence would have been preferable to this constant feeling of being alone. She felt worthless, she hoped that the refuge would help, but it didn't. This was the main difference she noticed when moved to Ferndale Refuge, here the staff listened and got involved, knowing that their doors were always open if you needed to find someone.

#### **Improvement Areas:**

- Details on the help and support available needs to be more widely advertised, so that all people not just those with young children know where they can go.

**Service User B:** Ongoing support from the Colcot Project and Sure Start.

**Service Rating:** Colcot Project and Sure Start – 10

### **Case Study**

The service user first found out about Sure Start and the Colcot Project through doing a course at the Open Learning Centre about 7 years ago. At the time she was not in an abusive relationship, although she had experienced one abusive partner previously.

With her first partner, she was very young and had a small baby; she was naïve and did not seek help with the situation. The relationship subsequently ended. She registered as homeless on the old housing system and was housed in Penarth within 6 weeks.

The police were involved follow an attack by this partner, she was due to go to give evidence in court but on the day he changed his plea so she did not have to.

She experienced abuse from a second partner when she became pregnant with her second child, initially they were minor incidents, but by the time the child was two the relationship was violent. Her son was going to the Sure Start crèche and she had built up good relationships with the staff there who were able to offer her help and support. She recognised herself that she needed help and signed up to go on the Pattern Changing Programme at the Colcot

Project. Initially she did not find the course useful as you need to want to change in order to fully appreciate the programme. However, after her second relationship ended and she had a brief relationship with another aggressive man, who broke into her home when she was asleep and tried to strangle her, she recognised the need to break the pattern of behaviour and move forward, the Pattern Changing Programme enabled her to do this.

Both of these perpetrators were also arrested by the police, one was imprisoned. The service user has always felt that once the police have got involved the matter is taken out of your hands and you no longer have a say. She felt that they did not seem to appreciate the emotional attachment or give enough protection. With both her first and second partners she has concerns where restraining orders have expired or when they are due out of prison that they will just come back to harass either herself or her children.

She has recently attended the Police Domestic Abuse Unit at Barry Island for the police to write a letter of support that she is in a dangerous situation if she remains in her current property. She found the officer there helpful and understanding.

Both of these perpetrators were also arrested by the police, one was imprisoned. The service user has always felt that once the police have got involved the matter is taken out of your hands and you no longer have a say. She felt that they did not seem to appreciate the emotional attachment or give enough protection. With both her first and second partners she has concerns where restraining orders have expired or when they are due out of prison that they will just come back to harass either herself or her children.

She has recently attended the Police Domestic Abuse Unit at Barry Island for the police to write a letter of support that she is in a dangerous situation if she remains in her current property. She found the officer there helpful and understanding.

The service user has attended hospital A&E and her doctor following assault and in both cases whilst her injuries were dealt with efficiently no one identified or questioned her as having been assaulted. Although this may have changed as she had more recently attended Barry minor injuries unit following an accident and was questioned as if they did not believe it was an accident.

She has been involved in various courses at the Colcot Project in order to build up her confidence and learn new skills. She also started to train to offer volunteer peer support to others, but did not complete the course because she started at Pencoed College.

Before attending the Colcot Project, she felt very low as a person and would walk down the street with her head down. It has taken a number of years, but she is now for the first time confident enough to go out and meet people without feeling as if she has to constantly look over her shoulder. She has also received additional support from the Sure Start centre, for example they visited the home to advise on safety and provide safety gates etc as she was on a low income.

Staff at the Colcot Project provide a lot of advice and support and help to now try and prevent further incidents happening rather than dealing with crises.

#### **Improvement Areas:**

- There is not a lot of support available in Penarth – she didn't know where to go for help when she lived there.
- GP Doctors need to have awareness training and contact information that they can refer women to.
- There need to be sufficient volunteers to work with young mothers to help build up their confidence.

**Service User C:** Women's Aid, outreach support.

**Service Rating:** Women's Aid – 10

#### **Case Study**

The service user had been in a long-standing relationship which over the last 5 years or so had become abusive, there was no violence but bullying and controlling behaviour. They were living in a council property, but her name was not on the tenancy. He had threatened to throw her out of the property on several occasions, therefore in June this year she decided to go to the housing department to find out where she stood if she were to be thrown out.

The housing officer was very helpful and helped her to fill in the forms then and there, if they hadn't she probably would never have completed them. Three days later she received a telephone call to let her know that a flat had become available if she would like it, she went to view and accepted it immediately. However, she was feeling very low at the time and because everything had happened so quickly she knew that she would need a lot of help and support to move, also she did not have any furniture or white goods to take to the property.

She spoke to the original housing officer, explaining her concerns and they recommended that she contact Women's Aid. A support worker visited her immediately and agreed that they could help and support her through the move, however that person then went on sick leave and she did not have any contact for over a week, this meant that she was unable to move out of the property and was out in an awkward and unpleasant situation in the relationship.

She eventually contacted Women's Aid again herself and said that she needed support immediately and could not carry on much longer; she was very low at this time. Women's Aid accepted that they had not treated her fairly and she was immediately allocated a different support worker. This worker was funded by TESS. The help and support that she received from this worker was excellent – within three days everything had been arranged and sorted for her to move into the flat, everything was done for her. The support worker had contacted a charity in Worcester for help with some of the furniture, she had obtained other stuff from a house clearance, arranged all of the utilities etc.

Within the first few days of moving into the new property the service user felt very low and wondered if this had been the worst decision she had ever made, she even attempted suicide. After this the support worker visited her 4 times a weeks, staying for 3 – 4 hours, helping her practically for example by driving her to doctor's appointments and arranging for her to meet debt counsellors at the Citizens Advice Bureau, but also just as importantly being there to listen to her and provide moral support. The service user was also dealing with alcohol problems and had given up drinking when she moved into the flat.

One day, the support worker was off ill and an alternative worker visited her that day so ensure she was all right. The support she has received from Women's Aid has been fantastic, there has always been someone there, even if on the telephone to listen to her and provide the additional help and support that has enabled her to rebuild her confidence made so much difference to her life.

She is now able to get on a bus and go shopping on her own, which she could not have done before. She feels the happiest now than she has ever done in her life.

She is now even back in touch with her partner and visits him every week, they are getting on better than ever before, but she knows that she will never move back in with him.

She feels that she will need to carry on receiving support for at least another 12 months and that her support worker is a very important part of her life at the moment.

She was aware of Women's Aid before her referral, because she had previously been involved in the Women's Circle and they had fund raised and provided volunteer taxi service for the refuge. So she was aware of the services that they could provide. However, she can't recall ever having seen any posters or promotional materials about them recently.

#### **Improvement Areas:**

- The only gap in service that she experienced was when she was left without a support worker when she needed the support the most. However Women's Aid acknowledged that they had let her down badly and quickly addressed the mistake when she contacted them.

**Service User D:** Women's Aid, ex-refuge resident

**Service Rating:** Women's Aid -10

### **Case-Study**

This service user was originally from the Vale of Glamorgan, but moved to Cardiff to live with her partner. Her partner started to become very abusive, so sought help from Newydd who put her in touch with Women's Aid. At this point the Service User had heard of Women's Aid, but did not know how to contact them.

Women's Aid was unable to provide accommodation immediately, so she decided to stay with a friend for a couple of weeks. During this time the service user found that she was not coping, so decided to contact Women's Aid again. The following week she was moved to Vale Women's Aid refuge.

The service user spent over 6 months within the refuge and during her time there received intensive ongoing support. During her time at the refuge, support workers helped her to register with a local GP, take her to hospital appointments and even arranged counselling sessions.

Throughout her time at the refuge, the service user felt supported, but felt that there was the need for trained counsellors within Women's Aid, specifically for clients who feel depressed, suicidal and emotionally in need of someone to talk to.

Women's Aid prepared the service user to move on from the refuge. She met with her support worker on a regular basis where she learnt new budgeting skills, pattern changing behaviour and confidence building with men. She found this support empowering, which helped to prepare her for greater independence.

Women's Aid also helped her apply for a Gold card through the Homes 4 U scheme as well as apply for any benefit entitlements. Shortly afterwards, she began bidding for properties and was successfully re-housed within 5 months. Once the service user had moved in, a Women's Aid support worker conducted regular home visits as and when required.

The service user has now been living independently for some time. She feels that Women's Aid saved her life, and felt that one way of paying back this compliment was to become a volunteer.

The service user described the support workers as "fantastic". And when asked what difference did Women's Aid make to your life? She responded "I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for Women's Aid, I owe a debt of gratitude that I will never be able to pay back".

### **Improvement Areas:**

- More sign posting of Women's Aid through greater publicity and posters in more locations across the Vale.
- Specialist counselling training for Women's Aid support workers.

## **Interviews with Assembly Members**

Interviews were also held with a representative from each of the main parties at the Assembly in order to obtain their experiences and party's policies on tackling and preventing domestic abuse. The findings of these interviews are summarised in the following tables.



Name:	<b>Jane Hutt</b>
Region:	Vale of Glamorgan AM
Political Party:	Labour Group

### Key challenges:

- Developing an integrated approach to tackle Domestic Abuse through an agenda that promotes prevention, crisis intervention and recovery.
- Promoting a multi-disciplinary response to Domestic Abuse to tailor services to individual clients.
- Encourage the Domestic Abuse Forum to make greater use of the Welsh Assembly Government's Domestic Abuse Strategy to deliver a strategic approach and steer the direction of policy and forum operations.
- The need for Housing and Social Services to work effectively together to share information and understanding of client cases.
- Lack of support Domestic Abuse victims that have been stigmatised by mental health problems.

### Good practice Examples:

**Women's safety Unit**-the success of this facility has been demonstrated by the unit's capacity to assist women who have experienced domestic abuse to remain in their own homes.

**New Dawn Project**- Cymdeithas Tai Hafan's Barry recently launched New Dawn as Lifelong Learning Project, funded by the Welsh European Funding Office and Elwa for female victims of Domestic Abuse. The project is based in Barry and is also operating in Flintshire, Wrexham and Powys from European Social funding.

This is an accredited training project designed to support women and their children by encouraging them to recognise and develop skills they may already have but are not confident of. It is pioneering project that closely monitors the progress of all participants through improvements in 'soft skills' socialising etc which is an essential of social inclusion.

Learning such skills enables the individual to engage in mainstream education and/or employment activities. Typical learning opportunities include: basic DIY, home safety, budgeting, confidence building and empowerment, healthy relationship management and coping with stress and anger.

**Barry Island Domestic Abuse Unit-** This unit is run to help support victims of Domestic Abuse in the Vale. It acts as a direct point of contact for existing victims of Domestic Abuse as well as an effective referral mechanism for new cases referred on by the Police. The unit is supported by two Police Constables (one post is a secondment) who act as caseworkers for each referral. The two caseworkers provide assistance to the client to secure their safety and act as a key liaison between the Police, courts and client.

#### **Key Improvement Areas:**

- Further develop and expand availability of Domestic Abuse Awareness training sessions to all agencies that deal with clients that have experienced domestic abuse.
- Greater emphasis on shared learning between agencies such as training/workshops on housing policy changes and changes to social services and Domestic Abuse legislation etc.
- Clarification of the Housing Allocations process to ensure that the allocation procedure is implemented fairly and consistently.
- The need for continuity in policy and practice.
- The appointment of a Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator as a matter of urgency.



Name:	<b>Alun Cairns</b>
Region:	South Wales West AM
Political Party:	Conservative Group

**Key Challenges:**

- Encourage victims to report incidents of domestic abuse, to enable early intervention and support where needed.
- Housing is a major issue. There is the need to maximise the use of housing associations that specialise in supporting and accommodating victims of domestic abuse.
- Rural areas of the Vale are isolated from support groups and agencies. More outreach and community support for domestic abuse victims in the rural parts of the Vale.
- One-size fits all approach should not be the response to domestic abuse cases. There need for agencies to work together as a multi-disciplinary team to tackle domestic violence and tailor services to the needs of the individual.

**Good Practice:**

**Safer Swansea Partnership-** This is an example of taking a joined up approach to tackling domestic abuse. The partnership is a cross-section of agencies some of which include Swansea Police Domestic Abuse, Women's Aid, Cymdeithas Tai Hafan, Victim Support and Social Services. Together they have conducted a number of awareness raising initiatives. A recent initiative was a road show held in the Quadrant shopping centre in Swansea. A number of representatives from the partnership were on-hand to visitors for a chat or simply to provide information leaflets.

**Key Improvement Areas:**

- It is vital that a fully integrated approach is adopted to support victims of domestic abuse. For this to be achievable, it is necessary that the level of support provided by agencies should be based on set time frames to effectively support individual needs.
- There is the need to further develop links with legal professionals. For example, by establishing a legal panel that will specialise in providing legal advice to victims of domestic abuse. The Domestic Abuse Forum could seek to develop an agreement with this panel to provide victims with their first legal appointment free of charge. Therefore, victims are more likely to seek legal advice earlier potentially enabling them to remain in their homes.
- There is the need to further develop and improve the links with GPs, to encourage the identification of signs of domestic abuse at an early stage. For example, there is the need for awareness training and correct and appropriate signposting to other agencies. This also GPs who provide an out of hours service through Prime care.
- More consultation with service users, to evaluate the effectiveness of services and shape future service developments.



Name:	<b>Leanne Wood</b>
Region:	South Wales Central AM
Political Party:	Plaid Group

### **Key Challenges:**

- Appointing a strong co-ordinator is central to raising the profile and strategic direction of the Domestic Abuse Forum.
- Ensuring that children don't become the forgotten victims of domestic abuse. There needs to be appropriate level of support services available for children who have experienced or witnessed domestic abuse.
- Funding issues in light of the future Supporting People budget cuts that will come into force after 2008.
- The Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004 will challenge existing support agencies, especially Women's Aid, to become more competitive when the provision of support services is opened out to private sector organisations.

### **Good Practice:**

**BAWSO (Black Association of Women Stepping Out)-** This group was established in 1995. This is an all Wales voluntary sector organisation, that provides a specialist service to Black and Minority Ethnic women and children that are homeless as a result of domestic violence. The organisation was originally part of Women's Aid, before separating off into its own group. It still remains closely affiliated to Welsh Women's Aid and often works in partnership with them. This organisation has significantly contributed to improving the lives of women and children to enable them to rebuild their confidence and self-esteem in a supportive and safe environment away from fear and violence.

### **Key Improvement Areas:**

- A more joined up approach to tackling domestic abuse in Wales is required in the form of joint training initiatives and awareness raising sessions between agencies.
- More support needs to be provided to GPs in areas where there are a number of patients that are experiencing/experienced domestic abuse.
- There needs to be greater emphasis on projects or initiatives aimed at prevention and awareness raising campaigns.
- There needs to be more focus on outreach support that will help the client move on and become more independent.
- There needs to be more substantial funding available for specialist support agencies like BAWSO (Black Association of Women Stepping Out).



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Region:	Cardiff Central AM
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### **Key Challenges:**

- Encouraging more victims to report incidences of domestic abuse.
- Often ethnic minority women are frightened to speak out within their close-knit communities. The greatest challenge is to find a mechanism through which women feel comfortable and acceptable to report domestic abuse incidents.
- A greater recognition of the link between violent sexual assaults and domestic abuse and how this affects all services.
- Greater awareness amongst GPs in relation to their role in the identification of domestic abuse.

### **Good Practice:**

**Family Circle Project (Cardiff)**-This is a project that assists families who have experienced some form of cruelty or domestic abuse. The Family Circle team work closely with the client alongside social services to prevent a family breakdown as a result of violence or cruelty. This is an example of effective prevention, where support services are provided at an early enough stage to encourage a change in a pattern of behaviour.

### **Key Improvement Areas:**

- The need to extend Sexual Assault Referral Centre SARCs throughout the whole of Wales.
- Awareness raising sessions for GPs and other primary care health specialists to assist in the identification and referral of suspected domestic abuse cases.
- More awareness sessions and training in Schools to assist teachers identifying the first signs of domestic abuse where children are involved.
- There needs to be more emphasis on pattern changing projects so that individuals and families can receive support before the situation hits crisis point.

### **3.2 Domestic Abuse Workshop**

A workshop was held during August 2006, to which all members of the Domestic Abuse Forum were invited, together with elected members, officers from across the Council, representatives from voluntary organisations, the police, NHS, Probation service and Crown Prosecution Service and other bodies that are involved in advising, supporting and working with families affected by domestic abuse. In total 39 people attended, which in itself is a reflection of the interest and enthusiasm that exists across the Vale of Glamorgan to tackle the problems associated with domestic abuse.

The agenda for the afternoon was centred on four breakout groups tasked to discuss set questions, the full findings are attached in appendix C. A summary of the key points and common themes coming out of the four groups are summarised below.

#### Workshop One

*What are the strengths and weaknesses in the way that domestic abuse is tackled and prevented in the Vale of Glamorgan?*

<b>Strengths</b>
MARACs – the multi-agency approach that provides an opportunity for each organisation to discuss individual case details.
The Domestic Abuse Forum – is well attended and provides a good networking and information sharing opportunity.
Designated domestic abuse social workers within children and family services.
The proactive agencies that exist - including the Colcot Project, Cymdeithas Tai Hafan, Women's Aid and the Police Domestic Abuse Unit at Barry Island.

<b>Weaknesses</b>
Lack of a co-ordinator has meant that the agenda for the forum has not moved forward.
No central co-ordination of activities.
Gap in services for male victims
Lack of communication with the Community Safety Partnership
Cases not making it to court, especially if the victim withdraws their evidence.
Lack of support service for children affected by domestic abuse.
Lack of sufficient out reach support.
Reactive approach – no preventative work.
Lack of refuge spaces.
Lack of clear strategic direction in the Forum – disagreement over priorities.
Lack of training for other officers, elected members and senior managers.
Need to break the cycle and pattern of behaviour.

No clear referral system from hospitals, A&E departments, GPs etc. Women can access various different accident departments so patterns of injuries get missed.
Threatened closure of Barry Magistrate courts.
Lack of recognition of all groups affected by domestic abuse e.g. vulnerable adults and older women.

## Workshop Two

*Based on the weaknesses identified in the first exercise, what would you identify as key priorities for tackling domestic abuse in the Vale of Glamorgan?*

Each member of the group was given three markers and asked to place them by what they considered to be the top three priorities. A summary of the key priorities across the four groups could be summarised as follows:

Ranking	Description	Number of Votes
1	A dedicated multi agency women's safety unit in the Vale - heading up all domestic abuse work in VOG	12
2	A Domestic Abuse Strategy and action plan	10
3	A co-ordinator in post to ensure that domestic abuse is moved forward on the agenda	8
4	Co-ordinator and safety unit – services for children and adults and perpetrators	7
5	More support workers	6
6	Social workers to have the time to be proactive not re-active	6
7	Lack of move on second stage refuge accommodation.	6

The following priorities all had three or four votes.

- Perpetrators programme – easily accessible and supporting the whole family.
- Raising the profile of domestic abuse and awareness of the issues.
- Increased emphasis on prevention.
- Support and recognition for male victims and same sex partners.
- Insufficient housing stock generally.
- Support for agencies to tap into funding sources, shortage of funds and sustainability of projects.
- Closure of Barry Magistrates Courts.
- Enough staff to make a difference.

The conclusion from this exercise is that the most important issues for those directly involved in preventing and tackling domestic abuse is the establishment of a co-ordinated, joined up, multi-agency approach – ideally based from one centre with a dedicated domestic abuse co-ordinator in post, and a clear strategy and action plan to take forward through the forum.

### **3.3 Visits to other authorities**

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, together with officer support visited the Women's Safety Unit in Cardiff and the Domestic Abuse Unit in Pontypridd to see first hand how other authorities are tackling and preventing domestic abuse in their area. The Women's Safety Unit (WSU) is discussed in detail in section 4.3 because it has been established and promoted as a best practice model to be adapted across England & Wales. A meeting took place with Jan Pickles OBE the unit Director and a representative from the Welsh Assembly Community Safety Unit, who expressed concerns about the lack of progress in the Vale of Glamorgan Council with the appointment of a co-ordinator and the know on effect that funding opportunities and initiatives are being missed out on, which will be adversely effecting the service received by the community.

Both Jan and the Assembly confirmed that they are happy and able to provide help and support to a co-ordinator, once in post and can attend either Scrutiny meetings or the DAF to pass on good practice and experiences to help develop services in the Vale.

The review team decided to visit the Domestic Abuse Unit in Pontypridd as this is a unit set up in a diverse and geographically spread authority and with no funding from the Council.

The domestic abuse unit in Pontypridd is based on a scaled down version of the Cardiff model. This proactive approach has been shown to work, as in the first year in one month there were 133 referrals to the unit. The forum successfully applied for the Building Safer Communities fund and received £50,000 through the Welsh Assembly Government to initially set up the multi-disciplinary team. This funding was ring-fenced to cover capital, revenue and training costs specific to developing a domestic abuse unit.

Due to the restricted funding, the Co-ordinator approached a number of agencies to second into the multi-disciplinary team. For example, an administrative worker from the YOT and a social worker from children's services who conducts the assessments. The DA co-ordinator acts as the team manager. This approach has enabled transfer of skills and knowledge between agencies. However, due to the geographical and history in Rhondda Cynon Taff they were unable to second one full-time worker from Women's Aid to the unit. Instead one worker from each of the three Women's Aid centres attends for one half day a week each. Although, Women's Aid has a presence at the unit, this approach is not working as effectively because of a lack of consistency. At present only the Pontypridd Women's Aid have been basing themselves at the unit, the other two centres don't seem to be working as effectively.

The support provided by the unit is not gender specific and is provided to clients on an appointment only basis. The unit encourage women to attend appointments at the unit, to promote the centre as a place of safety and security. Male victims are not allowed on the premises, so appointments are arranged off-site such as home visits or neutral venues.

The centre focuses its services on client led support such needs assessments, service signposting and outreach support. The unit provides a one-stop shop approach for victim support. The multi agency team are proactive – they pick up the telephone and offer support and for some people this initial telephone contact is enough, for others they need support through the court system or more general advice and information.

## Member Visits

A small group of Community Safety and Wellbeing Committee Members visited two facilities in the Vale and Pontypridd. These visits enabled members to view the facilities, meet with the staff as well as discuss and understand service provision issues in greater detail. The visits also allowed the review group to compare and contrast facilities and learn from the good practice. Highlighted below are the key issues that arose from discussions.

### *Barry Island Domestic Abuse Police Unit*

- This is a police unit that specialises in dealing with domestic abuse related referrals. The team comprises of a one full-time Police Officer as well as a seconded officer who act as caseworkers.
- The seconded officer is rotated every 6 months, however this can be problematic when attempting to build a rapport with clients.
- 99% of referrals are alcohol and/or drug related.
- The Vale currently has on average 20-25 referrals for male victims per month and yet there are no services or facilities for men in the Vale.
- On average 3-4 victims visit the unit each week. The majority of clients will make appointments to see one of the Police Officers. Since the unit is not based at a Police Station, clients feel more relaxed visiting the unit and talking to staff.
- MARACs Multi Agency Risk Assessment Committees are an effective mechanism through which domestic abuse cases can be discussed and a truly partnership approach to tackling this cases can be adopted. A number of agencies have signed up to the information sharing protocol that enables this to happen.
- Getting witnesses to court is often a problem, this will be further accentuated if the courts do close in Barry and cases are heard at Cardiff magistrates.
- Three priority areas for improvement were identified. These included a better understanding of the Council's Housing Allocations policy so that they can give clients accurate and correct advice the need for more staff and cross-agency working and a dedicated vehicle that the unit can use to conduct more outreach and home visits.

### Member comments

*"This is an great facility"*

*"I didn't even know this place existed, it is excellent"*

*"This is a wonderful place for victims of domestic abuse to get the support they need".*

R14 That a report in respect of the Domestic Abuse Unit in Barry Island be presented to the Scrutiny Committee in respect of the use of the building.

### *Pontypridd Domestic Abuse Unit*

- The Pontypridd unit was established using Building Safer Communities funding.
- The unit has only been open since Oct 2005 and now has a full complement of multi-agency staff. These included the secondment of a children's services social worker, a Police Officer and a seconded administrative officer from the Youth Offending Team.
- Within the 3 year Community Safety Partnership plan a series of four objectives has been set in relation to tackling domestic abuse.
- The Pontypridd unit takes a more proactive approach by contacting victims directly to offer support.
- The Police Officers that have been seconded to the unit are rotated every 6 months. This has proved beneficial, as it has helped to raise awareness of domestic abuse amongst officers within the force and enabled knowledge transfer.
- The unit is not gender specific, as support is available to male victims.
- At present the unit receives approximately 100 referrals per month. In July alone there were 133 referrals. In the league table for Police incidents, RCT is in 3<sup>rd</sup> position. And last year there were more incidents in RCT than in Cardiff.
- Research indicates that domestic abuse incidents increase seasonally.
- Although reporting of incidents and data capture has improved, there is currently no system to record at track repeat offenders.
- There needs to be more support services and options available for families that are affected by domestic abuse.
- Prevention is the key to preventing domestic abuse in the Vale.

### Member Comments

“This is such an innovative project that has made resourceful use of facilities and staff”.

“It is remarkable what this project has achieved in just 2 years”.

“This facility has opened up my eyes to what can be achieved through adopting a partnership approach”.

### **3.4 Equalities Assessment**

The Council has a duty to consider the needs and requirements of the community who are affected by our policies and procedures. Therefore as part of this review an impact assessment on equalities was completed.

Services are predominantly aimed at women as they are statistically the greater victims of domestic abuse. However there is an increase in male victims. There is currently no provision for support to these victims with the Vale of Glamorgan.

The Cardiff Community Safety Partnership has funded a pilot initiative '*The Dyn Project*' to provide a safety planning and advocacy service for men who have experienced domestic abuse. The project works with heterosexual, gay and bisexual men. The aim is to offer a one-stop shop approach for men who have experienced domestic abuse.

Caring Dads is an NSPCC and SureStart initiative aimed at trying to be proactive and supporting men who have concerns about their behaviour before it becomes an issue with authorities such as the police. The project is being piloted nationally in two areas in Wales and England and the Vale falls within one of these, although the courses are run in Cardiff.

### **3.5 Sustainability Assessment**

The Council is placing great emphasis on ensuring that the principles of sustainability are embedded across all services and policies. Sustainability in this context embodies the concept of living within environmental limits, but extends beyond this in seeking to ensure a strong, healthy and just society, achieving a sustainable economy and promoting good governance. In relation to tackling and effectively supporting victims of domestic abuse, this links directly to the sustainability of a strong, healthy and just society.

The updated Wales Programme for Improvement Guidance identifies sustainability as a '*key ingredient in effective and efficient performance...on all levels...from service delivery to strategic planning and community leadership.*' Therefore, a failure of the Council to meet community needs in a sustainable way is a failure to perform in a fully effective and efficient way.

As described earlier in this report, domestic abuse is often a self perpetuating cycle; children growing up in violent environs may develop social, emotional or physical problems which in turn require them to seek help from Council services. In the long term if this cycle could be broken and work undertaken to try and prevent the cause of the problem then the demand for support services could be reduced over time.

Therefore the most sustainable approach to tackling and preventing domestic abuse is to raise awareness and education, to address the root cause of the problem and to ensure that perpetrators are held to account rather than just providing the support and advice to the victims after the event. With the lack of strategic direction and fully joined up partnership working opportunities in the Vale currently it could be argued that the present approach is predominantly one of reactive rather than proactive support. However, in contrast to this the police statistics from the Barry Domestic Abuse Unit show that there is a very low rate of repeat offenders that could suggest that

awareness is being raised and in many cases problems are being addressed. Alternatively it could be an indication that after their experiences the first time people do not want to contact the police again.

R11 That a feasibility study be conducted to evaluate appropriate venues in the Vale for a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Unit.

R12 Raise awareness through publications and the Internet on the problems and issues associated with domestic abuse and the support services available. The promotion should make it clear that domestic abuse is not acceptable behaviour.

R13 A Cabinet Member be identified as a champion for tackling and preventing domestic abuse.

## 4 Notable Practice

Due to the priority being placed on tackling domestic abuse nationally there is extensive information easily available on the Internet. Examples of good practice models and initiatives together with evaluation reports and documents from Domestic Abuse Partnerships and Units across England and Wales can be downloaded to identify good practice and lessons learnt and implemented in the Vale. Two such websites are I&DeA <http://www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagId=452539> and the LGA <http://www.lga.gov.uk> whose project (see paragraph below) encourages networking and opportunities for one-to-one support, as well as producing written information and guidance. They are also able to share information about local projects, policies and protocols; the websites contains many good practice examples.

### 4.1 Local Government Association Research

The Local Government Association (LGA) is running a three-year, Home Office funded domestic abuse project. The purpose being to identify and promote good practice in addressing and reducing domestic abuse.

In September 2005 the report '*Learning from domestic violence partnerships*' was published, this was a piece of research undertaken by the Tavistock Institute which was a study of 10 local partnerships and highlighted good practice and lessons learnt. It identified that whilst each authority and partnership was unique there were a number of common experiences and problems.

The report concluded that in all cases there were three striking features which emerged in relation to the structure that existed to address domestic abuse:

- The Domestic Abuse Forum is the main vehicle for partnership working, although its name and roles vary across authorities.
- Structures are in transition within a rapidly evolving partnership landscape. For example in many areas they found that the local authority was seen as a relative newcomer who is now bidding to control how domestic abuse is addressed in the area.

- There is an emerging clarity around roles and structures that are useful or desirable. This involved a forum for practitioners, partnership and lobbying issues and for developing practices with a separate operational group for management and monitoring of services and outcomes.

Looking at the 10 authorities, all had a Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator, but where they were based and how they were line managed differed considerably. In four cases the post was a full-time permanent post mainstreamed within the local authority. The location of the post included the Community Safety Partnership, Housing and within the voluntary sector including a housing association. The findings were that there is no one ideal model for location and management of the post, this can vary depending upon the requirements of the role. However the clear conclusion was that it is essential that the post holder does not feel isolated or frustrated by their location.

A subsequent report was published by the LGA in September 2005 '*Checklist for local authorities in domestic violence partnership working*'. This report grouped good practice under five key headings: Leadership and management; Domestic violence co-ordinator role; Partnership working; Strategy and resources and Practice development and service delivery.

#### **Leadership and Management**

- There should be a named cabinet member and a senior officer with overall responsibility for tackling domestic abuse in the authority.
- Where ever possible ownership should be secured and shared by other members and officers, e.g. by having a domestic abuse lead in each relevant department.
- Commitment of resources and prioritisation of needs should be shared at the highest levels and clearly communicated internally and externally.
- Having a senior officer who is senior enough is essential both in the authority and with partner organisations, to ensure decisions can be made and progress implemented.
- Ensure the lead officer has the knowledge and attributes to mobilise commitment across partnership boundaries and within the authority.

#### **Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator role**

- Funding should ideally be permanent and at a level which secures continuity of approach and communication.
- The scope and purpose of the role needs clarity, needs to relate to the partnership's aims and to be communicated to partners.
- Periodical review of the location of the role should ensure that it is adapted to the changing needs of the work.
- Line management should provide knowledgeable and consistent support.

#### **Partnership Working**

- Partner agencies need to be involved in appropriate roles and structures, to reflect both their contribution and their needs. This requires a shared understanding of different partnership members' potential contributions and constraints.

- Representation of partners needs to match the needs of the agenda in different structures.
- The contribution of different partnership members and the constraints in which they operate need to be reflected in the style and role of partnership structures.
- An optimal set of structures is one, which includes a broad strategising group, an executive group capable of implementing strategy in different sectors and structure of sharing ideas and service development.
- Partnership structure benefit from linking into other strategic frameworks, such as homelessness strategies and the local children's strategic partnership.

#### Strategy and Resources

- Development of a strategy is important, but needs to be realistic taking into account the level of resourcing available and bring about quantifiable results, rather than being seen as an end in itself.
- A useful step is to identify costs incurred by the different agencies should they do nothing and therefore the number of cases continues to follow the existing trend. For example the costs of a mother and children becoming homeless.
- Strategies need to be seen in terms of increasing safety, holding perpetrators to account and providing services, identifying service gaps and service development options.
- Partnerships should adopt a 'good enough' strategy with ring-fenced time for review and adjustment rather than trying to get everything right first time. Monitoring should include survivor feedback, to identify the impact for service users.

#### Practice Development and Service Delivery

- This needs to be targeted at gaps in current service provision. Mapping the full picture of services provided by different partners can help identify these gaps and make explicit where practice development or service delivery needs to occur, avoiding duplication of effort.
- There are many examples of good practice which partnerships need to build on rather than reinvent the wheel. Services should also meet existing service standards, such as those being developed by women's Aid and Respect.
- A commitment should be made by the partnership to consider practice development and service delivery on a regular basis, both in terms of grants or SLAs developed, but also in relation to new or relatively new practice which may be being developed elsewhere e.g. work with BME groups, children and advocacy services.
- Evaluation of new initiatives in terms of their costs and benefits and appropriate location is essential before agreeing forward commitments.

## 4.2 Sanctuary Models

These are schemes set up providing additional security for victims of domestic abuse, enabling victims to remain in their own homes where safety can be guaranteed and where they wish to do so.

An example is in the London Borough of Harrow, where the scheme operates in conjunction with the police and the local domestic violence forum. Police attending incidents offer the service where appropriate together with an

outreach worker from Women's Aid to talk them through their options. The scheme is voluntary and available to women living in any tenure. Crime prevention officers make recommendations for suitable safety measures, which are carried out quickly to retain the client's confidence. In addition to installing new or extra locks and lighting, a secure sanctuary is created by converting a bedroom into a safe room with reinforced doors and bolts. Personal alarms and police mobile phones are also included. Within the Vale, the police are able to fund the creation of such rooms, although currently there are only a few in the area.

#### **4.3 Cardiff's Women's Safety Unit**

In Cardiff a Women's Safety Unit operates where the police, social workers, support workers, probation service, solicitors and other advice and guidance services are all available under one roof. This has been held up nationally as good practice.

The unit has clearly demonstrated the value of coordinating risk assessment information, practice and process between the civil/criminal interface. Independent advocates support survivors through both criminal justice processes and initial resettlement before, during and post intervention.

42% of survivors experienced no repeat incident and there were no police callouts in the 12 months (phase 1, October 2003-March 2005, Phase 2 October 2004-April 2005) following their case being heard at the MARAC. Those who did suffer repeat victimisation typically called the police at a less severe level of abuse than had previously been the case, reflecting improved confidence in the services received and a significant step towards the goal of earlier intervention. Furthermore, the combined work of the Cardiff Women's Safety Unit, improving policing and the MARAC process have increased reporting of domestic abuse from just over 150 cases/month to over 300 cases/month in 3 years. The level of reported repeat victimisation has dropped from 32% to below 10%. The number of children referred to Social Services for extra support has increased from 5% to 50% of cases. The number of survivors refusing to make a complaint has dropped from just under 60% to under 5%.<sup>7</sup>

All of these results, even increases in number are positive outcomes because they demonstrate that women are receiving the service that they need and the support is available to encourage them to hold the perpetrators to account and to move on to independent lives free of abuse.

The centre can be summarised as a multi agency team who provide crisis management support and signpost people on to other services. It is a model that is being held up as good practice across Wales and England. Three independent evaluations have been completed to date and more have been commissioned to identify the outcomes, costs and in the long term savings of having such a centre.

#### **4.4 Private Sector Engagement**

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<sup>7</sup> Robinson, Cardiff University Criminology Department – May 2005.

Nationally many companies are starting to recognise their responsibility to address issues that impact their customers, employees and the environments and communities in which they work. Unicef and the Body Shop International encourage businesses to ensure that time and resources are committed to protecting and supporting children exposed to domestic abuse.

Initiatives can include the private sector financing or otherwise supporting initiatives that seek to prevent domestic abuse and services that support all victims of domestic violence. They can engage with partnerships to develop public awareness and communication campaigns and fundraising initiatives. They can also increase awareness through employee education and training programmes.

One example is *The Stop Violence in the Home* campaign supported by the Body Shop International; they are working with charitable and government partners all over the world to encourage action against domestic violence. In 2005, the campaign was launched in 35 countries throughout the Americas, Asia, Africa, Australasia, Europe and the Middle East. The campaign is raising funds and awareness to help ensure that all victims of domestic abuse, including children are better protected and supported.

#### **4.5 The Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse – CAADA**

CAADA is a charity established to encourage the use of independent advocacy as a way to increase the safety of survivors of domestic abuse. Their aim is to create a consistent, professional and effective response for all survivors and in particular those at high risk.

They do this through the provision of services to advocacy projects, multi agency units and also through work with central government and its advisors.

They provide training programmes and continual professional training for advocates and are also piloting a project support programme for those establishing advocacy teams. For example, linked to the government initiative on the expansion of specialist domestic violence court areas, they have been running MARAC training in these areas.

Domestic abuse advocacy is founded on an understanding that a co-ordinated multi-agency response to those at high risk is the best way to deliver safety, reduce repeat victimisation and increase awareness of children at risk of harm.

#### **4.6 Best Value Performance Indicator**

To highlight the need for sustained local authority action and demonstrating that domestic abuse is not an issue for the criminal justice system alone in 2005 a revised Best Value Performance Indicator was published for English metropolitan authorities, London boroughs, unitary authorities and district councils.

The indicator is measured as a percentage score of the number of questions to which a local authority can answer 'yes'. The questions are:

1. Has the authority produced a directory of local services that can help victims of domestic violence?
2. Is there within the local authority area a minimum of one refuge place per ten thousand population?
3. Does the authority employ directly or fund a voluntary sector based domestic violence co-ordinator?
4. Has the authority produced and adopted a multi-agency strategy to tackle domestic violence developed in partnership with other agencies?
5. Does the local authority support and facilitate a multi-agency domestic violence forum that meets at least four times a year?
6. Has the authority developed an information-sharing protocol and had it agreed between key statutory partners?
7. Has the local authority developed, launched and promoted a 'sanctuary' type scheme to enable victims and their children to remain in their own home, where they choose to do so and where safety can be guaranteed?
8. Has there been a reduction in the percentage of cases accepted as homeless due to domestic violence that had previously been re-housed in the last two years by that authority as a result of domestic violence?
9. Does the council's tenancy agreement have a specific clause stating that perpetrators of domestic violence by a tenant can be considered grounds for eviction?
10. Has the local authority funded and developed a domestic violence education pack in consultation with the wider domestic violence forum?
11. Has the authority carried out a programme of multi-agency training in the last twelve months covering front-line and managerial staff in at least two of the following groups: housing, social services, education, health staff and front-line police officers?

In July 2005, the LGA produced a report providing a commentary on the new indicator and using a series of case studies to illustrate how local authorities have been developing their responses.<sup>8</sup> This report is available from their website – link at the beginning of section.

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<sup>8</sup> Implementing the new domestic violence BVPI, LGA 2005.

## **5 Conclusions**

For a long time domestic abuse has been a crime that has been hidden away and under reported. However, both central government and WAG are now determined to bring it out into the open and help tackle the root causes. Abuse occurs across society regardless of age, gender, race, sexuality, wealth and geography and victims suffer on many levels – health, housing, education, loss of freedom and despite all of the statistics, domestic abuse is still under reported and often hidden by the victim. This means that the real extent of the problem is not known; the true cost to society in both human and financial terms is immeasurable, although evidence suggests that the cost of the consequences to local authorities is millions every year.

Far more needs to be done to protect children and to prevent domestic abuse from happening in the first place. Much can be changed by bringing the problem out into the open and raising awareness, the message needs to be established that domestic abuse is damaging to everyone and is unacceptable. As outlined in the Welsh Assembly Government document, '*Tackling Domestic Abuse: The All Wales National Strategy*', it is important to address the root causes of abuse.

Education can help to prevent offending in the first place, the raising of public awareness about the unacceptability of domestic abuse, publicising the issues and make use of positive role models and community involvement and responsibility. From the children's perspective witnessing or being subject to domestic abuse can have serious adverse effects on their well-being and development. It is therefore essential that they have access to support services dedicated to their individual needs. There is cumulative damage that occurs to the children when parents do not receive the support they need. This demonstrates that there is a clear link between supporting the parent and safeguarding the welfare of the child.

Within the Vale of Glamorgan, the Domestic Abuse Forum has many committed and dedicated workers as members, and there are generally good working relationships and partnerships, however it has suffered from the lack of a Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator and has no strategic direction, strategy or action plan. Whilst this post has now been advertised and hopefully an appointment will be in place before the end of this year, the funding is still reliant upon WAG grants, however this is a common situation with many posts.

Research and comparisons with other authorities and Domestic Abuse Units has highlighted that the problems being experienced in the Vale are not unique; they are generally common problems that other areas are or have experienced. However, the issues have been exacerbated in the Vale due to the lack of a co-ordinator and the disparity within the forum. It is essential that once in post the co-ordinator quickly develops contacts with other co-ordinators across Wales to learn from their experiences and to implement practices that are working elsewhere – there is no point reinventing the wheel when the answer has already been tried and tested. The Co-ordinator could also explore whether there are any opportunities to work jointly or in partnership with adjoining domestic abuse units, for example Bridgend and

Cardiff, especially in relation to services such as perpetrator training and support programmes for male victims.

A great deal of expectation is being put on the post of co-ordinator before anyone has even been appointed, the vacancy of this post over the last 18 months has been used by several stakeholders as an excuse or reason why the forum has not progressed forward or driven the domestic abuse agenda in any strategic direction. Care needs to be taken on appointment that too much expectation and demands are not directed at the person immediately, which may deter them from remaining in post and ensuring that they get the support and guidance they need in order to take forward the Domestic Abuse Forum.

There is a lot that needs to be achieved and this post is key to many of these actions, however it must also be said that it is really only key as a co-ordinating post many of the actions are capable of being pursued by the existing forum members. Ownership and responsibility for the actions need to remain with the members who will be delivering the changes on the ground. Also, as previously mentioned there is a lot of expert advice and support available across Wales, including at WAG and this must be fully utilised to the benefit of the Vale and its residents.

Best practice evaluation and the Welsh Assembly Government both promote and support the development of multi agency centre to tackling domestic abuse within an area. These centres are currently being set up across the various unitary authorities in Wales. Examples show that these units can be set up at very little cost and can access funding channels that are currently not being explored in the Vale.

Within the Vale there is already a property utilised by the Police as a Domestic Abuse Unit, which has the scope and space to become a multi agency team. Senior Officers within the South Wales Police Force have expressed their commitment to tackling domestic abuse and in other authorities across the force area officers additional to the domestic units have been seconded to support these multi agency teams. There is no reason to believe that the same would be replicated within the Vale. There are council officers within children services dedicated to tackling domestic abuse; they could easily be transferred to the unit, as could the co-ordinator once in post. This would then ideally only need representation from the voluntary sector and both Women's Aid and Cymdeithas Tai Hafan could be approach to see if they could base a support worker in the unit, even if only for part of the week.

This would then create an experienced multi agency team who could response to those at high risk to deliver safety, hold the perpetrator to account, reduce repeat victimisation and increase awareness of children at risk of harm.

## **6 Recommendations agreed by Scrutiny**

The Community Wellbeing and Safety Scrutiny Committee made the following recommendations on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2007. These recommendations have taken into account issues identified during research, discussions with specialist officers, both internal and external and officers working in best practice authorities. Cabinet is requested to consider and approve each of the following recommendations made by the Community Wellbeing and Safety Scrutiny in relation to Domestic Abuse within the Vale of Glamorgan on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2007:

### **Recommendations**

- R1 Barry Court be encouraged to apply for specialist Domestic Abuse status and that practitioners ensure that all victims are aware of the practical assistance they can access via the Witness Care Scheme.
- R2 An appropriate representative is sought from the Local Health Board to attend the Domestic Abuse Forum Steering Group to further promote joined up working at a strategic level.
- R3 A review be carried out on the membership of the Domestic Abuse Forum to ensure that all services, both statutory and voluntary, working with victims, perpetrators and children of domestic abuse are represented. Council departments should not be over represented on the Forum.
- R4 Appropriate lines of communication and reporting links are established between the DAF and the Community Safety Partnership.
- R5 A Local Domestic Abuse Strategy and supporting action plan be prepared and implemented and that this is must aligned to the Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy, the annual Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and the Area Adult Protection Committee (AAPC) Business Plans. The local strategy needs to be realistic and focused on agreed priorities for the Vale of Glamorgan.
- R6 A set of outcome based performance indicators are developed to measure progress in the delivery of the agreed action plan. These should be regularly reported to the Health Social Care and Well-being Partnership, Community Safety Partnership, the LSCB and AAPC and include the monitoring of survivor feedback.
- R7 Housing Services provide training on housing policy and the role of other agencies to the Domestic Abuse Forum.
- R8 The Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator explores all possible funding opportunities and initiatives to identify the feasibility of developing a dedicated counselling and support service for children who have suffered or witnessed domestic abuse.

- R9 The Domestic Abuse Forum updates and republishes the Domestic Abuse information Directory booklet originally published by the Community Safety Partnership.
- R10 That the recently formed steering group and the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator consider treating the LSCB action plans arising from serious case reviews as an urgent priority.
- R11 That a feasibility study be conducted to evaluate appropriate venues in the Vale for a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Unit.
- R12 Raise awareness through publications and the internet on the problems and issues associated with domestic abuse and the support services available. The promotion should make it clear that domestic abuse is not acceptable behaviour.
- R13 A Cabinet Member be identified as a champion for tackling and preventing domestic abuse.
- R14 That a report in respect of the Domestic Abuse Unit in Barry Island be presented to the Scrutiny Committee in respect of the use of the building.
- R15 The review be amended where necessary to reflect the appointment of the new Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator and the recent changes to the Chairmanship of the Domestic Abuse Forum.
- R16 A protocol be considered for adoption for incorporation into a Service Level Agreement with Women's Aid for the provision of time limited support for women and their children to enable independence.
- R17 The above recommendations be referred to Cabinet for approval/consideration.
- R18 Progress on the above recommendations is referred back to the Scrutiny Committee within 6 months.

## **7 Decisions made by Cabinet**

The report along with its recommendations were presented to Cabinet on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2007 and following consideration, Cabinet resolved:

- (1) That recommendations 1-15 above be accepted with the additions that in respect of (11) and (14), further reports be also presented to the Cabinet.
- (2) That in respect of recommendation 13, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Safety be identified as the Champion for tackling and preventing domestic abuse.
- (3) That recommendation 16 above be deferred for consideration pending the review of Service Level Agreements generally within Social Services.

Appendix A

<b>Scrutiny Committee</b>	Community Wellbeing & Safety
<b>Scrutiny Chairman</b>	Councillor Janice Birch
<b>Scrutiny Review</b>	Domestic Abuse
<b>1</b>	<b>Review Focus</b> A review to evaluate how the Council contributes to tackling and preventing domestic violence in the Vale.
<b>2</b>	<b>Objectives and Purpose of the Review</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify and establish the extent of the Council's role and responsibilities in relation to domestic violence.</li> <li>• To evaluate how effectively the Council responds to its role and responsibilities and identifies areas of improvement (if any).</li> <li>• To identify the key agents the Council works with to tackle domestic violence in the Vale.</li> <li>• Through best practice research, to determine ways in which the Vale can add value to the work of partner agencies to improve their response to domestic violence without creating duplication.</li> <li>• To identify what can be done to improve the public's recognition of domestic violence and its associated consequences.</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<b>Desired Outcomes of the Review</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A clear picture is established of the roles and responsibilities of both the Council and key agencies (including the Domestic Violence Forum and the Safer Vale Partnership) in relation domestic violence.</li> <li>• Members understand Council's role in relation to domestic violence.</li> <li>• That the review acknowledges areas of good practice whilst identifying any service gaps.</li> <li>• That appropriate recommendations are put forward that will contribute towards tackling and preventing domestic violence in the Vale.</li> <li>• To raise the profile of domestic violence among the public, the Council and its key partners.</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<b>Information Required</b>  Baseline information in relation to domestic violence to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data on incidences of domestic violence compared with regional and national figures.</li> <li>• SWOT analysis of current service provision.</li> <li>• An outline of key partners the Vale works with in relation to domestic violence.</li> <li>• Details of any Service Level Agreements the Council has with the key agencies in relation to domestic violence.</li> <li>• Information on best practice guidance in Wales and England.</li> <li>• Outline of any initiatives developed by the Council or other key agencies to tackle domestic violence in the Vale.</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	<b>Format of Evidence</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report to be submitted by Scrutiny Chair.</li> <li>• Responses to member's questions.</li> <li>• External witnesses.</li> </ul>

Name	Organisation
DI Gary Bohun	South Wales Police
Cllr Alexander	Chair of the Domestic Abuse Forum
Sam Leach	Domestic Abuse Unit, Barry Police
Nick Fry	
Kim Hughes	Tai Hafan
Meriel Newton-Sykes	Women's Aid
Rosie McGuigan	Colcot Project
Antonia Bridges	Sure Start
Bob Cooke	Educational Welfare Service
Pam Toms	Supporting People Co-ordinator
Lynette Jones	Vulnerable Adults Co-ordinators
Maxine Thomas	
Rob Thompson	Housing Department
Hester Rees	
Tony Young	Head of Children and Family Services
Pam Crowley	Children's Services
Irene Banfield	Operational Manager, Partnership & Service Delivery
Alan Billinghurst	Acting Head of Housing and Community Safety
Debbie Maurer	Community Safety Team
Cllr Alexander	Chair of the Domestic Abuse Forum
Sandra Morgan	First Contact Team
Pam Toms	Supporting People Co-ordinator
Ann Evans	Pontypridd Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator
Jan Pickles	Cardiff Women's Safety Unit
Jane Andrews	Welsh Assembly
Service Users	Welsh Assembly
Jane Hutt AM	Welsh Assembly
Alun Cairns AM	Welsh Assembly
Jenny Randerson AM	Welsh Assembly
Leanne Wood AM	Welsh Assembly

## Domestic Abuse Workshop – 17<sup>th</sup> August 2006.

This afternoon workshop was held as part of the Community Well Being and Safety Scrutiny Review into how domestic abuse is tackled and prevented in the Vale of Glamorgan.

The workshop was attended by 39 people from various organisations.

Name	Organisation
Antonia Bridges	Sure Start Co-ordinator
Gary Bohun	South Wales Police
Sam Leach	Domestic Abuse Unit
Meriel Newton-Sykes	VOG Woman's Aid
Melanie Nobel	Barry Hospital
Sandra Burridge	Health Visiting Officer
Ruth Guy	Midwifery Service
Sue Bowyer	Constituency Caseworker
Christine Swallow	VOG Victim Support
Tara Williams	Probation Service
Lynsey Brown	Probation Service
Chris Cook	SSAFA
Kevin Wilkins	SSAFA
Kim Hughes	Cymdeithas Tai Hafan
Steve Walsh	RAF St Athan
Angela Joyce	Cymdeithas Tai Hafan
Mandy Walker	Social Worker
Pam Crowley	Social Worker
Sandra Morgan	Social Worker
Jackie Hancock	Social Worker
Diana Wilson	Social Worker
Rachel Talbot	Principle Officer
Caroline Walsh	Welfare Officer
Caroline Wilding	Welfare Officer
Leigh Caveny	VOG Council Housing Department
Pam Toms	Supporting People Co-ordinator
Sian Crinion Jones	Staff Development Adviser
Tracy Downes	YOT
Lana Gould	Refuge Manager
Cllr Colin Osbourne	VOG Council
Cllr Richard Birtin	VOG Council
Yvette Tyndell	
Alun Billinghamurst	Head of Housing and Community Safety
Lynette Jones	Protection of Vulnerable Adults Team
Maxine Thomas	Protection of Vulnerable Adults Team
Cllr Janice Birch	VOG Council
Cllr Jennifer Cole	VOG Council
Audrey Jones	
Cllr Keith Stockdale	VOG Council

The format for the afternoon was that everyone had been allocated into one of four groups, which were facilitated by independent officers from the Chief Executive's Department. The views of the four groups are detailed below.

### *Workshop One*

The exercise – *What are the strengths and weaknesses in the way that domestic abuse is tackled and prevented in the Vale of Glamorgan?*

<b>Strengths</b>	
<p><b>Blue Group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Court based in Barry- designed to prevent contact</li> <li>• Multi-agency approach working well - MARACS</li> <li>• DAF- Well attended – which is unusual</li> <li>• Police Domestic Abuse Unit – it exists and collates number etc. central database of people</li> <li>• Dedicated social services for referrals –specialised, - good links developed</li> <li>• Women's Aid and other support agencies e.g. Tai Hafan are pro active</li> <li>• Supporting People- grants to enable work to happen</li> </ul>	<p><b>Green Group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forum has its strengths such as information sharing and the development of projects/strategies.</li> <li>• MARACS-opportunity for organisations to discuss case details –also keeps Schools in the loop.</li> <li>• DAU &amp; Colcot project .</li> <li>• Good communication between agencies.</li> <li>• Specialist agencies- women's aid one of the lead agencies. –Specialist housing associations such as Tai Hafen.</li> <li>• Health and well being strategy</li> </ul>
<p><b>Orange Group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MARAC (Domestic Abuse)</li> <li>• Genesis</li> <li>• Professional networking</li> <li>• Social worker designated to Domestic Abuse</li> <li>• Domestic Violence Forum- Wide representation at Senior level</li> <li>• Information Sharing Between Agencies</li> <li>• Tai Hafan and Women's Aid</li> <li>• Colcot Project (Dedicated Workers supporting the project)</li> <li>• Impending appointment of Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator</li> <li>• Police Presence/Cardiff Home safe</li> <li>• Probation work on preventing re-offending wrt Domestic Abuse</li> <li>• Pattern Changing/Freedom Programme</li> <li>• NSPCC/Sure Start Programme</li> <li>• Domestic Abuse is high on the agenda because people care about the subject</li> <li>• High level of presentations/ prosecutions made from the Vale to the Crown Court in relation to Domestic Abuse.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Red Group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic Abuse Forum</li> <li>• MARAC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Domestic Abuse Reports completed by Police- Dedicated Team (one officer)</li> <li>- Pooling/Sharing Information</li> <li>- Multi-agency working- Social services/police/social services/housing.</li> <li>- Meet every 2 weeks</li> <li>- Adults and children- can identify incidents of men being the victims</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Training for those who work in the area – primarily Front line staff but is beginning to filter down</li> <li>• Raising awareness in the public</li> <li>• 2 dedicated workers in Children and Family Services</li> <li>• Perpetrator Training</li> <li>• Routine enquiry regarding domestic abuse for all Pregnant Women as part of their health check. There is now a dedicated domestic violence co-ordinator nurse in A+E.</li> <li>• Freedom Programme- looks at the abuse women have gone through</li> <li>• Colcot Project</li> <li>• Tenancy Support</li> </ul>

Weaknesses	
<p><b>Blue Group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Threat to courts in Barry</li> <li>• Shortage of refuge beds</li> <li>• Lack of support units generally not just refuge- outreach support. TESS only council accommodation</li> <li>• Gap for male victims/same sex – are the true number of male victims known</li> <li>• Perpetrator training and support services -NSPCC very small numbers can attend - no cover for Vale.</li> <li>• No DA co-ordinator for over a year- bids missed</li> <li>• What are services for Women and children in health services –GP? - Liaison with A+E. What support can they access?</li> <li>• Multi agency referral form – currently only the police</li> <li>• Gaps in figures/data –not all cases reported</li> <li>• Lack of support workers to provide support to stay in home</li> <li>• Reduction generally in housing stock</li> <li>• Cardiff WSU doesn't take cases from the Vale- funding based on incidents in the Vale</li> <li>• More preventative work</li> <li>• Disagreement over priorities for improvements –detrimental on funding bids</li> <li>• Public awareness</li> <li>• Link with vulnerable adults</li> <li>• Communication gap –info not flowing up and down due to no co-ordinator</li> <li>• Specialist workers who can interact and make a difference – White ribbon campaign (Canada/America)</li> <li>• Cases not making it to court – especially if victim withdraws</li> <li>• Support for children</li> <li>• Work with GP's</li> <li>• Society –inherit attitudes</li> <li>• Confidence/changing awareness support/programmes for women pattern changing/freedom –need for more like this</li> </ul>	<p><b>Green Group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No co-ordinator has meant that the Domestic Violence not moved forward on the agenda (5 dots).</li> <li>• No central co-ordination of activities.</li> <li>• Sometimes lacks an integrated approach</li> <li>• Personalities not protocols.</li> <li>• No support or recognition for male victims or same sex partners-Generally a female centred approach (3 dots).</li> <li>• Domestic Violence awareness training with other organisations</li> <li>• Staffing issues i.e. secondments and staff turnover</li> <li>• Domestic Violence liaison nurse (Cardiff) takes on VoG cases- There is the need for a designated nurse to deal VoG cases .</li> <li>• Women's safety unit or similar needed (2 dots).</li> <li>• Unrealistic housing expectations, particularly in relation to accommodations/support that is available. There is also insufficient housing (3 dots).</li> <li>• Lack of move on second stage accommodation (Children who go out of the country-disruption to education) (3 dots).</li> <li>• Lack of support for children of Domestic Violence backgrounds to deal with their support needs (1 dot).</li> <li>• Reactive approach</li> <li>• Prevention agenda needs more emphasis (1 dot)</li> <li>• Problems with agencies tapping into funding sources, shortage of funds and sustainability issues (4 dots).</li> <li>• Not all the key agencies attend the forum.</li> <li>• Domestic Abuse Forum lacks a clear strategic direction- with no clear aims or objectives (1 dot).</li> <li>• Not outward looking to best practice examples for domestic violence in the VoG (1 dot).</li> <li>• Lack of understanding of what other agencies do in relation to Domestic Violence.</li> <li>• Domestic Abuse Forum issues not filtered down via appropriate agency channels.</li> <li>• Community Safety Partnership does not have a high enough profile within the Domestic Abuse Forum.</li> <li>• Weaknesses in referral process in relation to A and E units. Domestic violence clients go out of the country for emergency treatment. Provides no true picture of cases within the Vale.</li> </ul>

Weaknesses	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closure of Barry Magistrates (3 dots)</li> <li>Cases split between Bridgend and Cardiff. Problems getting them to court.</li> <li>• Lack of outreach and support services. Mainly Barry or Cardiff based.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Orange Group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No Domestic Abuse Strategy (6 dots)</li> <li>• Limited links between Council Departments on Domestic Abuse issues (1 dot)</li> <li>• No cross authority working</li> <li>• No recognition of Domestic Abuse in relation to Housing allocation (1 dot)</li> <li>• Lack of awareness of non physical abuse across the board (1 dot)</li> <li>• Lack of emphasis on male victims of Domestic Abuse</li> <li>• Lack of joint training (involving the key agencies involved in Domestic Abuse) (2 dots)</li> <li>• High expectations in respect of the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator</li> <li>• Access to benefits (Homelessness/Domestic Abuse)</li> <li>• Lack of emphasis on prevention (3 dots)</li> <li>• Social Services assessment process (national)</li> <li>• 'Supporting people' across the Vale (Restricted across Vale)</li> <li>• Limited resources for children across the Vale (Domestic Abuse Situations)</li> <li>• Links between abuse and offending not recognised and resourced</li> <li>• Geographical inequity in resourcing and accessing services across the Vale</li> <li>• General funding of Domestic Abuse (local and national)</li> <li>• Per head of population-Vale has double the rate of incidents but has fewer resources to address this.</li> <li>• Victim support groups limited</li> <li>• Police referral –inconsistent (1 dot)</li> <li>• Variations across the agencies in perception of risks in relation to Domestic Abuse situations</li> <li>• Lack of initiatives wrt breaking cycle of domestic abuse in families (1 dot)</li> <li>• Competing issues and poor links between alcohol, drugs and Domestic Abuse (1 dot)</li> <li>• Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator not yet in post (1 dot)</li> <li>• Lack of a Domestic Abuse action plan (3 dots)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Red Group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No domestic violence co-ordinator</li> <li>• Has been advertised internally</li> <li>• But nature of post (being of short duration) will put people off</li> <li>• Lack of prosecutions –Legislation issues</li> <li>• Lack of recognition/awareness of other groups of people affected by domestic abuse -adults</li> <li>• Lack of refuge space- only one refuge in the Vale</li> <li>• Lack of info regarding procedure</li> <li>• Lack of programmes for perpetrators male and female</li> <li>• Lack of services for children</li> <li>• Lack of information even for people working within the area</li> <li>• Lack of procedures within organisations</li> <li>• Bail restrictions</li> <li>• Restrictions- One Domestic Abuse Officer- But secondment post vacant (Police-One protected job and another is seconded)</li> <li>• Lack of training of other staff, councillors, senior management, elected members</li> <li>• Lack of recognition that women are also perpetrators</li> <li>• Lack of facilities and awareness for men</li> </ul>

Weaknessess
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Victim led system. There is no strategy for offenders to change their behaviour and break the cycle of Domestic Abuse - situation often carries on. (1 dot)</li> <li>• Education programmes (lack of) (1 dot)</li> <li>• Evidence still required from women in relation to prosecution/ convictions</li> <li>• Health - Part time only Minor injuries Unit in Barry</li> <li>• Potential closure of Barry Courts (1 dot)</li> <li>• Lack of immediate response in addressing domestic abuse and related issues (e.g. new Zealand model) (1 dot)</li> </ul>

### *Workshop Two*

The exercise – *Based on the weaknesses identified in the last exercise what would you identify as key priorities for tackling domestic abuse in the Vale of Glamorgan.*

At the end of this exercise each member of the groups was then given three dots and asked to select their top three priorities for improvement.

<i>Key Priorities</i>	
<p><b>Blue Group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A dedicated multi agency WSU in the Vale- Heads up all work in VOG (10 dots)</li> <li>• Perpetrators programme –easily accessible –for whole family (3 interlinked groups) (4 dots)</li> <li>• More support workers (6 dots)</li> <li>• Co-ordination/links –avoid duplication identifies gaps and voids (2 dots)</li> <li>• Second stage refuge (1 dot)</li> <li>• Permanent funding for the co-ordinator post (2 dots)</li> <li>• Raising profile –awareness, -schools, -funding, -within health service (3 dots)</li> <li>• More preventative work</li> </ul>	<p><b>Green Group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No co-ordinator has meant that the Domestic Violence not moved forward on the agenda (5 dots).</li> <li>• No support or recognition for male victims or same sex partners-Generally a female centred approach (3 dots).</li> <li>• Women's safety unit or similar needed (2 dots).</li> <li>• There is also insufficient housing (3 dots).</li> <li>• Lack of move on second stage accommodation (Children who go out of the country-disruption to education) (3 dots).</li> <li>• Lack of support for children of Domestic Violence backgrounds to deal with their support needs (1 dot).</li> <li>• Prevention agenda needs more emphasis (1 dot)</li> <li>• Problems with agencies tapping into funding sources, shortage of funds and sustainability issues (4 dots).</li> <li>• Domestic Abuse Forum lacks a clear strategic direction- with no clear aims or objectives (1 dot).</li> <li>• Not outward looking to best practice examples for domestic violence in the VoG (1 dot).</li> </ul> <p>Closure of Barry Magistrates (3 dots)</p>

Key Priorities	
<p><b>Orange Group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address the current lack of a Domestic Abuse Strategy for the Vale</li> <li>• Develop an action plan to address the key priorities identified in the Strategy.</li> <li>• More emphasis on prevention and address the lack of prevention initiatives in the Vale.</li> <li>• No Domestic Abuse Strategy (6 dots)</li> <li>• Limited links between Council Departments on Domestic Abuse issues (1 dot)</li> <li>• No recognition of Domestic Abuse in relation to Housing allocation (1 dot)</li> <li>• Lack of awareness of non physical abuse across the board (1 dot)</li> <li>• Lack of joint training (involving the key agencies involved in Domestic Abuse) (2 dots)</li> <li>• (Homelessness/Domestic Abuse)</li> <li>• Lack of emphasis on prevention (3 dots)</li> <li>• Police referral –inconsistent (1 dot)</li> <li>• Lack of initiatives wrt breaking cycle of domestic abuse in families (1 dot)</li> <li>• Competing issues and poor links between alcohol, drugs and Domestic Abuse (1 dot)</li> <li>• Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator not yet in post (1 dot)</li> <li>• Lack of a Domestic Abuse action plan (3 dots)</li> <li>• Victim led system. There is no strategy for offenders to change their behaviour and break the cycle of Domestic Abuse - situation often carries on. (1 dot)</li> <li>• Education programmes (lack of) (1 dot)</li> <li>• Potential closure of Barry Courts (1 dot)</li> <li>• Lack of immediate response in addressing domestic abuse and related issues (e.g. new Zealand model) (1 dot)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Red Group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-ordinator and safety unit – services for children and adults and perpetrators (7 dots)</li> <li>• Revision of policies with regards to boys aged between 16 and 18</li> <li>• More refuge space (2 dots) – Second stage refuge- individual units (2 dots)</li> <li>• Someone from adult services to attend MARAC (1 dot)</li> <li>• Training sessions available for all who are interested in issues to do with domestic abuse, including Members, Chief Officers etc.</li> <li>• Social workers to have the time to be pro-active not re-active (6 dots)</li> <li>• Feedback from forums to agencies and those delivering the service (1 dot)</li> <li>• Challenge the closure of Barry court- impede service and bring back probation service into vale</li> <li>• Going into schools to educate children-maybe use ENO's (1 dot)</li> <li>• Vale to arrange services themselves (2 dots)</li> <li>• Enough staff to make a difference (4 dots)</li> <li>• Learning from and working with other Authorities</li> <li>• Housing policy for perpetrators (1 dot)</li> <li>• Not very much support for victims to remain in their own homes</li> <li>• People Being taken aware from their support networks – children in schools</li> <li>• Lack of facilities in rural western Vale</li> <li>• Lack of communication between Corporate centre and Agencies and lack of transparency</li> <li>• Priorities of council in general</li> <li>• Much talk and Forums taking place, but not seeing the outcomes</li> <li>• Better joint working with other Authorities – e.g. the Safety unit which operates in Cardiff and Pontypridd</li> <li>• Lack of resources and ensuring they are used in the right areas</li> </ul>