

Terms of Reference Domestic Abuse Forum April 2015

1. Purpose

The Community Safety Partnership is established to meet the requirements of Section 5 & 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and any amendments made to it in subsequent legislation. The Community Safety Partnership's targets in terms of reducing crime, anti-social behaviour, fear of crime and substance misuse are set out in the Community Safety Partnership Plans drawn up under the terms of the legislation and guidance.

The Domestic Abuse Forum is comprised of a wide range of over 100 statutory and voluntary organisations based in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames. The Community Safety Partnership supports the work of the Domestic Abuse Forum and consults with its membership with respect to issues relating to domestic abuse which affect the residents of Richmond upon Thames.

2. Objectives

The objective of the Community Safety Partnership is to reduce crime, anti-social behaviour, and the fear of crime and to tackle the drivers of crime (particularly drugs and alcohol).

The agreed CSP Domestic abuse objectives for 2015-16 are:

- **To achieve positive outcomes for all victims of domestic violence and abuse including children and young people**
- **Increase the effectiveness of the MARAC**
- **Increase awareness of the MARAC and the effect of domestic violence and abuse on all victims including children and young people**

The key role which the Domestic Abuse Forum undertakes is that of a Forum with a broad strategic overview of all the work being undertaken in the Borough in relation to domestic abuse, including statutory partners and the wide range of voluntary organisations.

The broad aims of the Forum are to:

- Promote networking and the sharing of ideas and information in relation to domestic abuse across the Borough
- To educate and disseminate new information relating to Domestic Abuse through guest speakers and discussion of topical issues

- To serve as a means of communication to the wider community of Community Safety Partnership's new initiatives in response to domestic abuse
- To serve as a focal point for domestic abuse issues arising in the wider community which can then be referred back to statutory partners/Community Safety Partnership for action/feedback

3. Membership

3.1 Members

Membership of the Forum is open to representatives of statutory agencies, formally constituted organisations/groups and individuals subscribing to the Forum's Terms of Reference which are able to assist the Forum in its work. Representatives of new organisations/groups can join at any time subject to majority approval from the membership.

Membership shall include the local authority (e.g. Housing, Social Services and Education and Children's Services), Police, Refuge, Victim Support, health professionals, and other statutory, non-statutory and voluntary sector agencies as appropriate. Members will be expected to attend at least 2 meetings a year in order to continue their membership of the Domestic Abuse Forum in Richmond upon Thames.

3.2 Chair

The Chair and Vice Chair will be elected from within the Forum and shall serve for one year, with the possibility of re-election (for a maximum of two further years). Their election will take place at the Annual General Meeting (normally held in May). The Chair is responsible for chairing the Forum meetings. The Vice Chair to deputise for the Chair as necessary.

3.3 Substitute members

Substitute members are permitted to attend in the place of members. Details should be provided to the Domestic Abuse Coordinator in advance of meetings. Substitutes should be briefed as to the agenda and any actions for the organisation they represent.

4. Roles and responsibilities of members

All members of the Forum recognise:

- That domestic abuse is unacceptable in our community. All individuals have the right to live their lives free from abuse and violence and the threat of abuse and violence.
- That domestic abuse happens regardless of age, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class, HIV status, nationality, marital status, religious or political beliefs.

- That while the majority of victim/survivors are women, men do experience domestic abuse and that services should therefore be appropriate to a range of needs.
- That a whole range of behaviours can constitute abuse, including physical, psychological, sexual, financial and emotional abuse.
- That children also experience abuse directly themselves, or as witnesses, and therefore abuse in the home must be specifically addressed within responses around child protection, and children's needs must be addressed within responses around domestic abuse.
- That all services should be offered in a non-judgemental manner and aim to maximise choices.
- That mutual respect, trust, professionalism and a desire for sensitive and appropriate service delivery are essential to a multi-agency approach.
- Members of the Forum are accountable to their respective organisation/group.
- That confidentiality is of paramount importance to ensure safety.
- That effective multi-agency consultation on policy and practice has a vital role in service delivery, and agencies represented on the Forum will give a high priority to such consultation.

The DAOG acts as the steering group for the MARAC and Domestic Abuse strategy and policy and will feedback to and consult with the Domestic Abuse Forum on a quarterly basis on performance and operational issues.

Ad-hoc sub-groups may be established to progress specific areas of the domestic abuse work in the Borough from time to time.

5. Accountability

The Domestic Abuse Forum is run independently of the Council and will be supported by the Domestic Abuse and Hate crime coordinator. The Community Safety Partnership which will also support its work is not accountable for the Forum.

6. Decision Making

Decisions will be arrived at by majority decisions of those in attendance at the Forum meetings and recorded in the minutes of the Domestic Abuse Forum.

7. Frequency of meetings

The Forum will meet four times each year, the dates for the following year being agreed at the last meeting of the year (normally October).

In order to extend the participation of a wide range of groups and organisations, the timing of these meetings will where possible aim to include daytime and evenings.

8. Secretariat

A volunteer from the memberships will take minutes of the Domestic Abuse Forum meetings and will compile minutes for approval by the Chair of the meeting and the Domestic Abuse Coordinator. The Domestic Abuse Coordinator is responsible for receiving agenda items and the distribution of the minutes of Forum meetings. The Domestic Abuse Coordinator will set the draft agenda for approval by the Chair and Vice-Chair wherever possible two weeks prior to each meeting.

Every member of the Forum has the opportunity to place items on each meeting's agenda. The Domestic Abuse Coordinator should receive these items no later than two working weeks before the date of the next meeting.

9. Financial Arrangements

Any funding allocated to the Domestic Abuse Forum from the Community Safety Partnership will be monitored by the Community Safety Partnership. Other resources will be provided by the membership either in terms of funds or resources such as staff time.

10. Communication

Communications will be managed through the Community Safety Partnership's Domestic Abuse Coordinator.

11. Diversity

The membership of the Domestic Abuse Forum will adhere to the aims of the Diversity and Equality agenda in its work.

12. Complaints

Complaints should be addressed in writing to the Chair of the Domestic Abuse Forum, and will be discussed with the Domestic Abuse Coordinator of LBRuT for appropriate action. Any written complaints will receive a response within 14 working days.

13. Exit Clause

The Domestic Abuse Forum will be wound up if the membership consider the work has been achieved, or may alter or change the scope of its work as circumstances change over time, with the majority agreement of its membership.