

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT

Social Work Committee : 8 June 1999	Subject : Scottish Partnership on Domestic Violence - Draft Workplan and Timetable
From : Jim Dickie, Director of Social Work Prepared by : John S Scott, Principal Officer, Criminal Justice	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to:

- Inform the Committee of the content of the consultation paper circulated by the Scottish Office Home Department
- Seek approval to forward comments to the Scottish Office.
- Consider the most effective method of contributing further to national developments in relation to domestic violence.

2. BACKGROUND

The Scottish Partnership on Domestic Violence was established in the second half of 1998 following an announcement by Henry McLeish at a conference held in June. The conference followed the publication and launch of a number of pieces of work in Scotland relating to domestic violence. The Scottish Partnership was established to bring together, at national level, the key organisations with a role in meeting the needs of women and children experiencing domestic violence. Local Authorities are represented on the Scottish Partnership through COSLA. The purpose of the Scottish Partnership was to provide a forum for the strategic discussion of relevant policy and service delivery issues.

The Draft Workplan and Timetable is the result of the work of the Partnership to date. This has been circulated for consultation across a wide range of interested agencies. A report on the consultative phase of the Partnership's work will be made to Ministers by the end of August.

3. CONTENT**3.1 CORE VALUES**

The consultation paper outlines a number of core values. These include:

- The recognition that any work relating to domestic violence is part of the promotion of human rights in society and the elimination of all forms of discrimination.
- That there are many forms of violence in society and that all are unacceptable.

- That domestic violence is related to the wider agenda of inequality, and is linked to other forms of violence against women. It is associated with broader inequalities in society, and is part of a range of behaviours constituting male abuse of power.
- That in tackling such violence it is always necessary to take account of the specific needs of particular groups, and to ensure that any provision which is made is relevant and appropriate.

3.2 STRUCTURE OF DOCUMENT

The consultation paper considers the background and remit for the Scottish Partnership, gaps in services and responses to domestic violence, the work envisaged to develop policy and services, resource implications, and a timetable for development. The main points are highlighted below.

3.3 THE WORK ENVISAGED

The main section of the document concerns work envisaged to develop national policy and the co-ordination of comprehensive services .

This section is broken into the following areas:

- The development of a **national strategy on domestic violence**. It is envisaged that the strategy will provide broad guidance in terms of objectives, and will set out priorities. A national strategy will include agreements on definitions, discussion of the responsibilities of service providers, development of a list of organisations with a role in domestic violence, and ongoing consultation.
- Detailed **costing of priorities** of the Partnership, identification of resource requirements, and the availability of resources to meet identified needs.
- The need to develop a **national policy statement** relating to domestic violence, to review existing policies and legislation, and to continue to examine the impact of existing policies which affect women and children seeking support from service providers. This will include research into the impact of policies relating to domestic violence in operation internationally, consideration of the development of new policy areas and consideration of the impact of domestic violence in other relevant service reviews.
- In addition to the development of an appropriate policy context, consideration will be given to the needs of women and children to **access relevant services**. These will include for example, accommodation, finance, health, education and transport.

One of the key themes running through the findings of recent research has been the identification of barriers to access to services. The responses of service providers have often been found to be inconsistent, sometimes unsupportive, and for there to be a lack of clarity on whether, or how, particular services can meet needs. The scope of women's needs may make the identification of services complex, with women requiring access to a wide range of services.

Specific groups of women and children who have faced particular barriers to access to services include those from minority ethnic groups, those with disabilities, and those from

rural areas.

- Research also stresses the lack of consistency and levels of co-operation between services, and the Partnership places particular emphasis on the need for the development of **area based strategies and multi- agency working**.
- The development of **good practice guidelines and service standards**.
- The provision of **information** to women and children.
- The development of **service improvements**.
- The development of **education and training**. Within this area particular emphasis is placed on awareness raising and preventive work to challenge the abuse by men of women, and to empower women. This includes the development of work with children and young people, the development of workplace awareness raising and the promotion of general advertising
- It is also considered that specific preventive work with **perpetrators** should remain within the context of a continued emphasis on the criminal aspect of domestic violence.
- It has been seen by the Partnership that few organisations maintain relevant **statistical information**. Emphasis is placed on the need to ensure that relevant information is drawn together from multiple agencies to inform the development of policy, strategy and services.

3.4 PRIORITIES

The priorities of the partnership have been laid out in the following timetable:

- April - September 1999 : The consultation period
- September - December 1999 : Resumption of a full schedule of meetings, and the start to addressing the initiatives and projects identified in the Workplan
- January - March 2000 : The development of service changes.
- April to July 2000 : The continued development of service changes.
- July 2000 onwards : Evaluation and monitoring of the impact of initiatives, the development of expertise, networking and guidance, and the collation and dissemination of information.

4. RELEVANCE TO NORTH LANARKSHIRE AND COMMENTS ON THE CONSULTATION PAPER

Many of the Departments of the Council work with the difficulties caused by domestic violence. This includes Social Work, Housing and Education. The importance of the topic was recognised in North Lanarkshire, in the development of the Community Safety Strategy, when domestic violence was identified as one of the highest priorities for the strategy, by the Council and other agencies involved.

The Consultation Paper is coherent, properly identifies the values and principles which should apply in this area of work, and sets out a programme which should contribute significantly to the development of services for this particularly vulnerable group. The development of the Community Safety Strategy reflects the recognition, within North Lanarkshire, of the need for a multi- agency approach, and is entirely consistent with the principles laid down in the Consultation Paper. This work provides a solid base on which to contribute to national developments, the co-ordination of services within North Lanarkshire, and the wider development of services.

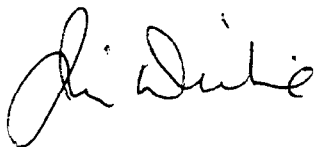
To some extent, improvements in multi-agency working can be achieved within existing resources by improving systems for information gathering, planning, communication, adjusting the focus of existing services, and removing barriers to access to services. The extent of need is substantial, however, and the application of additional resources is essential to the development of a sufficient range of services for those affected by domestic violence.

Consideration needs to be given to the most effective method of contributing to national developments. As noted above, several departments provide support to those affected by domestic violence. Service developments will involve all of these, and co-ordination of effort and information and planning might best be achieved through the further development of the Community Safety Strategy, in the context of this national development. The Committee is asked to consider referring this matter to the Committees of Housing and Education for interest and comment, and to the Policy & Resources Committee for consideration in relation to the development and implementation of the Community Safety Strategy within North Lanarkshire.

6. RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is asked to :

- Note the contents of the Consultation Paper.
- Approve the comments made for submission to the Scottish Office.
- Refer this report to the Housing Committee and Education Committee for their interest and to the Social Inclusion Committee for its interest, with reference to the Community Safety strategy.



Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work

May 24th 1999

For further information contact John S Scott, Principal Officer, Criminal Justice (01698 332029)