



Child Victims of Domestic Abuse



A report from Overview & Scrutiny





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Preface

Cllr Margaret Sutton

Chairman, Vulnerable Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee



This report highlights the shocking scale and widespread impact of the problem of domestic abuse in Birmingham with a clear focus on the impact on children and young people. The harm can begin before children are even born and can have consequences that follow young people throughout their lives. It can affect children physically, socially, emotionally, psychologically, economically, educationally and sexually. Domestic abuse also has a huge impact on the caseload for children's social care with a large proportion of children on the at risk register living in households where domestic abuse occurs. These children are likely to require significant support to stay safe.

Responding to domestic abuse requires services to work together to prevent it taking place, to maximise opportunities for identification and to provide appropriate support to victims.

It is clear that young people have different ways of referring to domestic abuse and perceive it as something that happens in adult relationships, not theirs.

In terms of prevention, engaging with young people in developing awareness raising campaigns increases their knowledge of the issue and leads to new ways of spreading the message about healthy relationships.

We need to ensure that we listen to young people. It can be very daunting for a child or young person to disclose domestic abuse and it is important for the adults working with them to listen and know how to respond appropriately. We then need to provide appropriate targeted support. Providing support to a non-abusive parent is often a very effective way of promoting the child's welfare. A variety of other means of support also need to be provided and effective partnership working and engagement with the third sector is absolutely essential to offer and provide the targeted support necessary.

The commitment and energy of the many agencies and partnerships involved in tackling domestic abuse is commendable and undeniable. However the City Council needs to provide both adequate resources and leadership to meet the challenge of providing city-wide co-ordination in order to respond adequately to the needs of children and young people who experience and witness domestic abuse. Failure to do this risks young people in Birmingham entering exploitative and abusive relationships of their own and perpetuating the cycle of abuse in future generations.



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Summary

Children have a right to be protected from abuse. However children and young people living in Birmingham continue to witness and experience domestic abuse on a daily basis. This review has highlighted that we cannot afford to ignore the plight of these children as the impact of domestic abuse is wide ranging and can seriously undermine their chances in life. It can lead to physical ill health, damage psychological development, cause disruption to education and although domestic abuse takes place in all sections of society, it is often linked with severe economic deprivation. The existence of domestic abuse in a household increases the likelihood of a child growing up in poverty. The relationship between domestic abuse and child neglect is also strong as the victim cannot always adequately protect their child from the perpetrator. Furthermore, Members have received evidence that some young people in Birmingham are entering abusive relationships of their own, indicating that domestic abuse is likely to continue to impact on generations of children to come.

Many services, both statutory and voluntary have contributed to this review. What has been evident is the commitment to challenge the issue of domestic abuse and support victims in this City. However without appropriate co-ordination and resources it is impossible to do this.

The main findings of this review are as follows:

- More needs to be done to promote healthy relationships to young people. There is a lack of consistency in the school programmes currently on offer and in the level of community involvement, including that of young people, in programme/campaign development and delivery.
- Referrals between agencies in relation to domestic abuse are not centrally recorded and outcomes of interventions are not measured. This prevents agencies identifying and putting in place the resources required to tackle the issue and support victims.
- There is a lack of clear accountability for supporting child victims of domestic abuse and identifying their needs. The Children, Young People and Families Directorate does not have a Lead Officer to promote work around domestic abuse, develop best practice and ensure appropriate information sharing internally or with partners. There is only one city-wide domestic violence co-ordinator and she does not have a sole focus on the child victims of domestic abuse. Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board does not include in its membership either the Chair of Birmingham Domestic Violence Forum or the City's Domestic Violence Co-ordinator.
- Not all victims of domestic abuse have access to timely and appropriate support. Particular concern was expressed for:
 - Victims with no recourse to public funds.
 - Child victims living in temporary accommodation.
 - Child victims who may benefit from counselling services.



- Child victims who continue to live with the abuse but have been identified as being at low risk.
- Sixteen and seventeen year olds experiencing domestic abuse who may be parents themselves but fall between service remits.
- Adult victims of domestic abuse who are parents and carers of children.

There is evidence that domestic abuse that is not challenged increases in scale and severity over time and that the impact of this abuse on children and young people is huge and may have lifelong consequences, which in the worst case scenario could result in a child's death. It is therefore essential that it is identified and tackled purposefully and that appropriate support is provided where necessary. Failing to address this issue will prove costly not only for the victims and families involved but for society as a whole.



Summary of Recommendations

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
	Awareness Raising		
R1	That the Safer Birmingham Partnership works with the Children's Trust and Birmingham Domestic Violence Forum to develop a Domestic Abuse/Healthy Relationship Schools Programme Forum, to enable organisations that provide specialist domestic abuse programmes to draw up core principles for undertaking work, share good practice, ensure areas such as Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation are included and work is co-ordinated to promote a whole community approach to raising awareness, which includes training for all those who support children and young people.	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families, Cabinet Member for Local Services and Community Safety	June 2010
R2	That the Children, Young People and Families Directorate in implementing the suggestions made in the 2008 'Domestic Violence' Scrutiny Overview report and the recommendations made in the April 2009 'Education on Relationships and Sexual Health' review, ensures that work emphasises the importance of healthy relationships to young people.	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families	June 2010
	Listening to children and young people		
R3	That the Children, Young People and Families Directorate commits to consulting with young people in Birmingham about their views of relationships and to involve them in developing a long term campaign on the issue. This should be reported to both the Children and Education and the Vulnerable Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committees.	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families	June 2010
R4	That the Safer Birmingham Partnership and the Children's Trust bring together third sector and statutory services that provide counselling services, to co-ordinate work and ensure that domestic abuse disclosures during counselling sessions are recorded, so that the resource implications in relation to domestic abuse can be identified.	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families, Cabinet Member for Local Services and Community Safety	December 2010



Working Together			
R5	That responsibility to attend Birmingham Domestic Violence Forum is written into the job description of a senior manager within the Children, Young People and Families Directorate. This role should be publicised to staff within the Directorate so that best practice can be shared both internally and with partners.	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families	June 2010
R6	That the new temporary one year role, supporting the Safer Birmingham Partnership Domestic Violence Co-ordinator focuses on children and young people and that Birmingham's PCTs, West Midlands Police and the Children, Young People and Families Directorate work together to identify long term funding for this post.	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families	June 2010
R7	That Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board invites the Chair of Birmingham Domestic Violence Forum or the Safer Birmingham Partnership Domestic Violence Co-ordinator to sit on the Board and contribute to serious case review panels where domestic violence is a feature in order to facilitate improved partnership working.	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families, Cabinet Member for Local Services and Community Safety	June 2010
R8	That the Children, Young People and Families Directorate develop and promote protocols to ensure that services within the Directorate such as schools and Children's Centres can feed information into the Joint Screening process.	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families	June 2010
R9	That the Children, Young People and Families Directorate ensures that if a child or young person is identified through Joint Screening as requiring a CAF, partners are engaged in undertaking this and a Lead Practitioner is identified.	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families	June 2010
R10	That the Children, Young People and Families Directorate formally acknowledges receipt of notifications and informs referrers that no further action has been taken if this is the appropriate response identified.	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families	March 2010
R11	That Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board promotes and delivers training on the Barnardo's tool and evaluates the outcomes of its use for children and their families, with particular attention being paid to monitoring	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families	December 2010



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<p>R12</p>	<p>the outcomes for sixteen and seventeen year olds.</p> <p>That the Children, Young People and Families Directorate Duty and Assessment Team Managers receive training on MARACs and that clear protocols are developed to ensure that information from all other Children, Young People and Families Directorate services for example schools and Children's Centres can be shared with them.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families</p>	<p>June 2010</p>
<p>R13</p> <p>R14</p> <p>R15</p>	<p>Minimising Disruption</p> <p>That the Cabinet Member evaluates the work of the Education Social Worker to ensure that children continue to have access to education whilst living in temporary accommodation and schools are supported in ensuring that those children are safe. The results of this evaluation should be provided to Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board, Birmingham Domestic Violence Forum and the Vulnerable Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>That the Cabinet Member works with partners to identify and secure funding for outreach and refuge support workers for children and young people who experience domestic abuse.</p> <p>That the Birmingham Domestic Violence Forum and the Children, Young People and Families Directorate identify how many children are being referred to them who have No Recourse to Public Funds status, the safeguarding issues in relation to this, reports findings to Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board and the Vulnerable Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and formally addresses the issues with the responsible Government Minister.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families</p> <p>Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families</p> <p>Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families, Cabinet Member for Local Services and Community Safety</p>	<p>June 2010</p> <p>December 2010</p> <p>December 2010</p>
<p>R16</p>	<p>That progress towards achievement of these recommendations is reported to the Vulnerable Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2010. The Committee will schedule subsequent progress reports thereafter, until all recommendations are implemented.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families</p>	<p>June 2010</p>



1 Background to the Review

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Children have a right to be protected from abuse. This right is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which requires the State to protect children from all forms of physical and mental violence, injury or abuse (Article 19) as well as from sexual abuse (Article 34).
- 1.1.2 The impact of domestic abuse on children and young people varies. Some children and young people are very resilient and demonstrate no negative side effects. On the other hand, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) highlights that children can be affected physically, socially, emotionally, psychologically, economically, educationally and sexually. Research has also identified that in 30-60% of domestic abuse cases, the perpetrator is also directly abusing the children.
- 1.1.3 Birmingham Safeguarding Children's Board (BSCB) website states that between 33000 to 40000, which equates to roughly 12-14%, of Birmingham's children and young people are affected by domestic abuse. Many of these children will have witnessed or heard domestic abuse, will sense that their carer is unhappy and some will have been abused themselves.
- 1.1.4 Responding to domestic abuse requires services to work together to seek to prevent it taking place, to maximise opportunities for identification and to provide appropriate support to victims. As our remit focuses on children and young people, this Committee has looked at what expectations young people have for their own relationships in the future and what can be done to break the cycle of abuse, preventing it having an adverse impact on generations to come. In April 2008 the Local Services and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee produced a 'Domestic Violence' overview report. This report examined ways the City Council could make perpetrators "accountable" through policies such as those on housing and through the use of civil orders which can curtail the movement or behaviour of individuals. The overview report made suggestions in relation to school programmes, the support for children and young people living in refuge accommodation and city wide campaigns targeted at young people. These have been examined in greater detail within this review and the implementation of all the overview suggestions are regularly tracked by the Local Services and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.1.5 The Committee has found that young people in Birmingham and nationally, are entering exploitative and abusive relationships of their own, indicating that domestic abuse is likely to continue having an impact on generations to come. Domestic abuse that is not challenged increases in scale and severity over time. It is therefore essential that it is identified and tackled purposefully and that appropriate support is provided where necessary in order to minimise the detrimental consequences for future generations. Domestic abuse is costly not only for the victims and families involved but for society as a whole (refer to 1.4 and 1.5).



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1.2 Definition

- 1.2.1 The Home Office describes Domestic Violence as; 'Any threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between adults who are or have been in a relationship, or between family members. It can affect anybody, regardless of their gender or sexuality. The violence can be psychological, physical, sexual or emotional. It can include 'honour-based violence', female genital mutilation, and forced marriage.'
- 1.2.2 Domestic violence does not always involve a physically violent element so the term can be misleading. Throughout this report we will therefore refer to domestic '**abuse**' as this term encompasses all elements of power and controlling behaviour that may be present.
- 1.2.3 Domestic abuse is frequently in the context of abuse against a female victim by a male perpetrator, this report however recognizes that both men and women can be victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse occurs between couples in heterosexual and same sex relationships, between other family members such as between children and parents, and between siblings. Perpetrators can also be extended family members or a partner's immediate and extended family. This report will refer to the victim and the perpetrator rather than the gender or the relationship that exists between the perpetrator and the victim.
- 1.2.4 The Home Office defines domestic abuse as something that takes place between adults, but domestic abuse takes place in young peoples relationships and domestic abuse between adults has a significant impact on children and young people. Throughout this report we will highlight that children and young people are victims of domestic abuse.

1.3 The Impact

- 1.3.1 The impact of domestic abuse on children and young people is huge and may have life long consequences.
- 1.3.2 **Pregnancy and Birth** – Evidence was presented to the Committee by a Senior Educational Psychologist within the Children, Young People and Families Directorate which highlighted that harm can begin as a result of domestic abuse before children are even born. Miscarriage and low birth weight are associated with domestic abuse, and the stress hormone released by an expectant mother as a result of abuse can reduce the growth of the foetus and impact on brain development.
- 1.3.3 **Children Living with Domestic Abuse** - For those children who live with domestic abuse, BSCB's website states that they: 'will grow up in an atmosphere of fear, tension, intimidation and confusion. They may; directly observe physical or sexual violence; often experience, emotional violence and abuse. Have been directly threatened, injured or abused. Forced to participate in the abuse and degradation by the abuser. Live with secrecy and shame. Feel that somehow it is their fault that it is happening. Intervene and get injured themselves.'



- 1.3.4 **Neglect** - The relationship between domestic abuse and child neglect is of particular concern. The ability of the non abusing parent/carer to care for children may well be impaired by the abuse they experience or directly restricted by the abuser. A 2008 Department for Children, Schools and Families report which analysed child deaths and serious injury through abuse and neglect by looking at the findings from serious case reviews identified that: 'Well over half of the children had been living with domestic violence, or parental mental ill health, or parental substance misuse. These three problems often co-existed.'
- 1.3.5 **Health** - Children and young people's health can be severely affected by domestic abuse. The Department of Health's handbook for professionals states that domestic abuse causes a variety of physical health problems ranging from bruising, broken bones, burns, sleep disturbance, stress-related illness (asthma, bronchitis or skin conditions), to eating difficulties or self-harm.
- 1.3.6 **Psychological Development** - The Senior Educational Psychologist explained to Members that the impact of living with constant threats, put downs and fear can significantly damage the relationship between the adult victim and their child. As a result the child may develop insecure attachments with caregivers leading to problems with psychological development which can affect a child or young person's ability to form secure relationships later in life. This may also result in poorer mental health outcomes.



Above: The experience of a child living in a refuge in Birmingham.

- 1.3.7 **Disruption and Bullying** - Evidence from the Safer Birmingham Partnership about the ability of children and young people to enjoy and achieve whilst experiencing domestic abuse stated that: 'Children will often have their education disrupted severely, either by having to flee the violence or by the impact of dangers at home. They are also likely to experience isolation and bullying, because of the fear, shame and secrecy surrounding the abuse.'
- 1.3.8 **Enjoyment of Life and Long Term Consequences** - The Education Psychology Service provided evidence about the impact of domestic abuse in different phases of life. During infancy brain development is susceptible to the effects of domestic abuse, resulting in a reduction in the ability to deal with stress. In childhood, there may be aggression or withdrawal and difficulties in forming friendships. School phobias may develop. In older children domestic abuse may result in depression, excessive risk taking, participation in family violence, limited career aspirations and an increased likelihood of teenage pregnancy. Birmingham Youth Service explained to Members that young people who experience domestic abuse feel 'scared, on edge, anxious and worried.'



1.5 The Cost

- 1.5.1 The existence of domestic abuse in a household increases the likelihood of a child growing up in poverty. Domestic abuse can lead to physical and psychological ill health, increased lone parenthood, reliance on welfare benefits, isolation, and an increased inability to escape. A 2008 Treasury report stated that; 'The outcomes of poverty today can also be the causes of poverty tomorrow thus perpetuating a vicious cycle where the costs can only escalate.'
- 1.5.2 Domestic abuse has a huge impact on the caseload for Children's Social Care. In 2002 a Department of Health report examining women's mental health stated that: 'Nearly three-quarters of children on the At Risk Register live in households where domestic violence occurs.' These children are likely to require significant support to stay safe. In Birmingham a lot of money is spent on children and young people who require support due to their enduring and complex needs. Birmingham's Brighter Futures Strategy states that: 'The Children, Young People and Families Directorate has a budget for direct services of £178.5m and funds 58 services. The majority (53%) of this expenditure is spent on Tier 4 services (provision for children with enduring and complex needs).'
- 1.5.3 Domestic abuse needs to be challenged as evidence shows that without challenge, the severity and frequency of abuse increases, which has significant detrimental effects on children, young people and families. Domestic abuse is mentioned in over half of the published Birmingham Serious Case Reviews that have taken place following a child's serious injury or death, when abuse or neglect is known or suspected. This demonstrates the potential risks of domestic abuse to children and their families and the importance of intervention to prevent problems escalating.

2 Awareness Raising

2.1 City Campaigns

- 2.1.1 It is important for society to understand that domestic abuse can occur to anybody at any time in their lives, and that domestic abuse is unacceptable no matter what form it may take. Representatives from Birmingham Youth Service discussed with Members responses to a questionnaire that they had sent out about the experiences of the young people who use their services. Although only a small sample of young people in Birmingham, 43% of the young men and 71% of the young women who completed the questionnaires had experiences of domestic abuse.
- 2.1.2 BSCB and the Safer Birmingham Partnership have demonstrated commitment to raising awareness amongst young people about the issue of domestic abuse. It was noted that city wide campaigns need to be developed to specifically target young people. As young people are entering abusive relationships themselves there is a need to encourage them to look at their own relationships and check that they are healthy and positive.



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- 2.1.3 Findings from research undertaken by the Youth Service showed that young people have different ways of referring to domestic abuse and perceive it as something that happens in adult relationships and not theirs. It was reported to Members that young people in Birmingham are much more comfortable with the term 'unhealthy/healthy relationships' rather than domestic abuse, when considering their own relationships.
- 2.1.4 In March 2009, the Youth Service, with partner organisations, invited young women from two schools to attend a one day conference entitled 'Is this love?'. The conference was held to help raise awareness about domestic abuse and the day ended with the young women being asked to design posters to spread the message about healthy relationships to their peers.
- 2.1.5 In September 2009, the Committee held an event which invited young people to share their views with Members about domestic abuse. At the event a young person who attended the March conference read to Members the poem that she had written which demonstrated what she had learnt from the day. The awareness raising posters that the young people designed at the conference were also displayed at the event.
- 2.1.6 Also at the event, representatives from INVOLVE - Northfield Young People's Forum, discussed with Members the work that they undertook with the Lantern Project to increase their own awareness about domestic abuse and spread the message to their peers. INVOLVE have developed innovative ways to spread the message about domestic abuse to their peers in accessible formats for example through the use of Podcasts and Bluetooth messaging
- 2.1.7 The importance of engaging with children and young people was highlighted in the 'Education on Relationships and Sexual Health' review which was completed by the Children and Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April 2009. Recommendation eleven of that review recommended that the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families works with Birmingham UK Youth Parliament and Birmingham Children and Young Peoples' Parliament to implement the work of this review (the April 2009 review) and report back to Scrutiny (the Children and Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee). **(R3)**



Above: Cllr Wood and Cllr Neilly exploring Bluetooth

2.2 School Programmes

- 2.2.1 Evidence presented to the Committee by BSWA, Loudmouth Education and Training (Loudmouth), South Birmingham Domestic Violence Forum, Ashram, East Education Action Zone (EastEAZ) and the Adults and Communities Directorate Bharosa Service identified the importance of whole community approaches in tackling the issue of domestic abuse. Involving parents/carers, local services, teachers and other school staff in domestic abuse programmes gives out a strong



message that domestic abuse is unacceptable, ensures appropriate support is available for victims and encourages positive action to combat domestic abuse.

- 2.2.2 Members were informed of ad hoc arrangements between organisations to deliver domestic abuse training in schools. However no evidence was presented about how local specialist domestic abuse providers are formally working together to co-ordinate their work and agree on core principles of domestic abuse training. Without co-ordination, it is clearly difficult to establish what resources are available in the City to undertake this work and to measure the outcomes of awareness raising work with children and young people. **(R1)**
- 2.2.3 Members were informed that there is no central commissioning budget for awareness raising work in schools. Programmes take place inconsistently across the city, dependent on what funding is available for schools, their commitment to access awareness raising programmes, the resources available to specialist organisations to work with schools and the awareness raising programme content on offer.
- 2.2.4 The above issues were identified in the April 2009 'Education on Relationships and Sexual Health' Scrutiny Review. The review made a number of recommendations to improve the continuity of provision in the city and the engagement of parents, young people, governors, teachers and other organisations in development and the delivery of school programmes. **(R2)**
- 2.2.5 The April 2009 Review also identified a lack of focus on relationships within sex and relationship education and made a recommendation to rename it, 'Relationship and Sex education'. This is significant to this review as domestic abuse is explored by pupils within their 'relationship' education.

3 Listening to Children and Young People

3.1 Handling disclosures

- 3.1.1 It can be very daunting for a child or young person to disclose domestic abuse and it is important for the adults working with them to listen and to know how to respond appropriately. Birmingham Domestic Violence Forum (BDVF) and BSCB have endorsed best practice in working with children and young people who are affected by domestic abuse.
- 3.1.2 The Birmingham Domestic Violence Resource Directory 2009 provides information to those in contact with victims of domestic abuse. When working with children who disclose domestic abuse guidelines include:
- Respond appropriately by validating what the child is telling you;
 - Ensure that the child knows that they are being listened to and that you believe them;
 - Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you and
 - Make sure that the child understands that domestic abuse is not their fault.



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- 3.1.3 The importance of listening to young people was reinforced by a small study undertaken by Birmingham Youth Service, which undertook eight semi-structured interviews with young people. It demonstrated that all the young people affected by domestic abuse valued the opportunity to 'get it off my chest' and one young woman said 'I could just come here and cry and it would be fine'. All of the young people said 'just talking' made them feel better.

3.2 Training for school staff

- 3.2.1 Staff working in schools need to know how to teach children and young people about healthy relationships and respond appropriately to disclosures. Members have received information about the role of the Children, Young People and Families Directorate Health Education Service in providing appropriate resources and training for staff to undertake domestic abuse awareness raising in schools.
- 3.2.2 Members were informed that the Health Education Unit often delivers training sessions to whole staff groups. Sessions available include training provision for non-teaching staff such as lunchtime supervisors, learning mentors and other school support staff.
- 3.2.3 Despite the provision of training from the Health Education Unit, EastEAZ identified a lack of available training for school support staff in their area which covers Kitts Green and Shard End. A representative from EastEAZ explained that training support staff is particularly important as children disclose domestic abuse to them because they often live in the local community so are known and trusted by children. Support staff also work with the children outside the formal teaching environment so they have more time to talk and listen to the children.

3.3 Community approaches

- 3.3.1 It was explained to Members that EastEAZ devised and delivered training in partnership with local organisations, the community and specialist domestic abuse organisations. By taking a whole community approach, people were prepared for handling disclosures and a clear message that domestic abuse is not acceptable was shared. Members were informed that the withdrawal of funding from the NSPCC has hampered the progress in rolling out training opportunities in the EastEAZ areas and evaluating the outcomes of training already undertaken.
- 3.3.2 Evidence from South Birmingham NHS PCT informed Members about a multi-agency project that was undertaken in the Quinton area, which looked at building a whole community approach to support families experiencing domestic abuse, and raise awareness of the impact of domestic abuse. Members were advised that a key issue that hampered the progress of the project was the need to ensure training was accessed by professionals prior to raising the issue of domestic abuse with children and young people.
- 3.3.3 An Officer from the Housing Directorate explained to Members that a domestic violence support project has been commissioned by the Directorate in Kings Norton, to raise awareness about the issue amongst local service providers, to support victims and to develop domestic abuse education



projects with schools in the area. The Committee was informed that there are currently no plans to extend the project however this may be considered if an evaluation of the project demonstrated clear successes.

- 3.3.4 Members were concerned that without measuring the outcomes of community training and awareness raising projects, it is difficult to identify the benefits of them. This issue was also identified in the April 2009 'Education on Relationships and Sexual Health' scrutiny review which stated in its findings that; 'There is a need to support the development of effective evaluation practices within schools to ensure that these programmes are meeting the needs of all students and sharing good practice within Sex Relationship Education (SRE), especially in terms of assessing the benefits of SRE to young people.'

Below: Loud Mouth Theatre Company providing an example to Members of a school awareness raising programme.



3.4 West Midlands Police

- 3.4.1 A recent report by the NSPCC entitled 'Children and families experiencing domestic violence: Police and children's social services' responses', has highlighted the role that Police Officers need to play in listening to children and young people at the scene of an incident. Representatives from West Midlands Police explained to the Committee that by January 2010 all Officers will be trained in the use of the new Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment (DASH) Tool, (explained in 4.3.1), which will encourage frontline Police Officers to check children are safe and talk to them at the scene of an incident.
- 3.4.2 From September 2009 onwards Police Officers have received training on the management and investigation of Honour Based Violence and Forced Marriage and from January 2010 all Police Officers will receive basic child protection recognition and referral training. This training will include safeguarding responsibilities which will emphasise the role of all staff in avoiding missed opportunities in identifying a child or young person at risk of harm.
- 3.4.3 West Midlands Police highlighted to Members the complex nature of challenging different forms of domestic abuse when victims often do not want to discredit their families, lose contact with them or have them punished. To ensure that issues can be handled sensitively, reflecting the wishes of the victim, West Midlands Police explained how they are committed to raising awareness of Forced Marriage Protection Orders, which can be used to protect both children and adults at risk, and to take victims of forced marriage out of the situation.



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- 3.4.4 Members were informed that the City Council has a Legal Services Officer working to undertake Forced Marriage Protection Orders and that BSCB has developed clear procedures on how agencies should respond to the issue. Forced Marriage and Honour Based Violence training is now offered to all practitioners including Social Workers so that they have the confidence and knowledge to appropriately respond to these situations.

3.5 Health Services

- 3.5.1 Health practitioners play a key role in identifying and supporting the victims and children of domestic abuse. Department of Health guidelines state that all Midwives should ask when the victim's partner is not present, if domestic abuse is an issue.
- 3.5.2 Health practitioners undertake child protection training and representatives from all three Birmingham Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), on a regular basis, access additional training opportunities provided by BSCB. Where domestic abuse is an issue, practitioners will support the family and try to ensure that other family support e.g. that which is provided by BSWA is put in place.

3.6 Counselling Services

- 3.6.1 Children may have wide ranging and conflicting emotions in relation to their domestic abuse experiences, and may need help and support to make sense of them. Representatives from Ashram explained to the Committee that the service comes into contact with children affected by domestic abuse, who have feelings of 'anger, hatred, loss, sadness, grieving and confusion'.
- 3.6.2 Birmingham Children's Centres demonstrate their commitment to listening to children by working towards the 'Hear By Rights' model, with staff trained to have the skills and ability to enable young children's voices to be heard. Members were informed that it is important that counselling services provided are appropriate to the age and understanding of the individual child.
- 3.6.3 Evidence was presented by partners that counselling services not specifically aimed at supporting victims of domestic abuse nonetheless provide early intervention for children, young people and their families affected. EastEAZ discussed with Members how school mentoring schemes are used to support young victims of domestic abuse and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) described a number of counselling services in Birmingham that children, young people and their families can access (refer to 3.6.4 and 3.6.5).
- 3.6.4 Members were informed that in the Heart of Birmingham Teaching PCT and South Birmingham NHS PCT localities there is an Open Door Youth Counselling Service for young people aged 12-18 years old. Although not a reason for referral, domestic abuse is sometimes disclosed during counselling. Due to demand, there are plans to pilot this service in the NHS Birmingham East and North PCT area later this year.
- 3.6.5 It was reported to Members that a city wide service called the ARCH is also available for children and their families. Some referrals are made to ARCH specifically in relation to the impact of



domestic abuse; however families also disclose domestic abuse in sessions as their confidence increases. Domestic abuse incidents are worked through with families, however if a child shows signs of significant mental health issues a referral will be made to CAMHS.

- 3.6.6 CAMHS supports children and young people experiencing mental health issues such as anxiety, self harm or depression. Referrals are not received in relation to domestic abuse, although 'Therapists find that domestic abuse is disclosed in a number of therapy situations.'
- 3.6.7 Despite the availability of commissioned counselling services and those that schools, the voluntary sector and the youth service provide, feedback from a survey to Children's Centres identified that there is a shortfall in access to appropriate therapy and counselling services for children. Ashram also informed Members that children using their services were suffering unnecessarily as they had to wait 12-16 weeks to be seen by a counselling professional. To remedy this situation Ashram has successfully raised funding to provide their own counselling service, however this will only be available in the short term.
- 3.6.8 Members were informed that services including CAMHS do not record cases that have a domestic abuse element within them, making it difficult to establish the resource implications of domestic abuse and how services can work together to co-ordinate and commission appropriate counselling services. **(R4)**

3.7 CAFCASS – Safe Contact

- 3.7.1 The Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS), stated that domestic abuse is often a feature in private law cases when parents or carers cannot come to an agreement about, for example contact or residence arrangements. CAFCASS undertake work to ensure that safe arrangements can be made.
- 3.7.2 When domestic abuse is known to be an issue, CAFCASS will contact the Children, Young People and Families Directorate and the Police to find out if domestic abuse incidents have been recorded and if Children's Social Care is working with the child. If the family is not already known to Children's Social Care, CAFCASS Family Court Advisors, will undertake initial screening assessments, welfare reports and other services to gather the information required for the Family Courts. Welfare reports include a child's view of their family life, their feelings and wishes. All Family Court Advisors undertake mandatory training about domestic abuse.
- 3.7.3 If CAFCASS identify that a child has been exposed to domestic abuse or child protection issues have been identified, Children's Social Care is informed. In recent times this process has been improved with the introduction of standardised forms; however CAFCASS identified that there is still a need to develop a system where receipt of a notification is formally acknowledged by Children's Social Care. CAFCASS also reported the speed at which Children's Social Care and the Police respond to requests for information is variable, which sometimes creates difficulties for CAFCASS in respect of providing timely initial risk assessments to court. **(R10)**



4 Working Together

4.1 Birmingham Domestic Violence Forum

- 4.1.1 Effective partnership working is essential in order to ensure early intervention and co-ordinated prevention. BDVF is a multi agency partnership working strategically to end domestic violence against women and children. The forum is tasked with implementing the Pan Birmingham Domestic Violence Strategy 2006-09.
- 4.1.2 Strategic Priority number 4 of the Pan Birmingham Domestic Violence Strategy states an intention to ensure that children and young people exposed to domestic abuse have the skills to build relationships based on respect and equality. Work is currently underway to revise the Strategy and develop a new twenty year prevention campaign with the intention of ensuring that children and young people have access to the appropriate tier of support and are listened to, at all milestones in their lives.
- 4.1.3 Members were informed that the Pan Birmingham Domestic Violence Strategy is co-ordinated by one Domestic Violence Co-ordinator who works within the Safer Birmingham Partnership. There is currently no specific role focusing on co-ordinating work for the child victims of domestic abuse in the City but funding for a one year post to support the Domestic Violence Co-ordinator has recently been established. This post has yet to be filled as it needs to go through the City Council moderation process, which may take up to three months. **(R6)**
- 4.1.4 Despite having an impact on children and young people, BDVF, reports to the Director of Adults and Communities. The evidence presented to Members was that currently no-one from Children's Social Care is attending BDVF and where accountability lies for this within the Directorate is unclear. **(R5)**

4.2 Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board

- 4.2.1 BSCB has the statutory duty to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children in the City and ensure the effectiveness of this work. Members were informed that BSCB has acknowledged that domestic abuse seriously undermines the chances of children 'Staying Safe'.
- 4.2.2 BSCB continues to monitor the implementation of the Pan Birmingham Domestic Violence Strategy 2006-09 to evaluate the effectiveness of the arrangements detailed in Strategic Priority Number 4 of the strategy (refer to 4.1.2). To ensure a link between the organisations, BSCB has a named person that attends BDVF.
- 4.2.3 Despite having its own representative on BDVF, BSCB has identified difficulties in receiving an update on the implementation of the Pan Birmingham Domestic Violence Strategy from the Safer Birmingham Partnership. The lack of staff to cover leave, and the insufficiencies in staff resources within the Safer Birmingham Partnership to co-ordinate domestic abuse work has had a detrimental impact on the relationship between the organisations. In addition it is important to



note that despite the clear links between domestic abuse and child protection neither the Chair of BDVF nor the Safer Birmingham Partnership Domestic Violence Co-ordinator are represented on BSCB. **(R7)**

- 4.2.4 Members were informed that BSCB has pushed domestic abuse and its impact on children and young people up the agenda in Birmingham. BSCB has provided funding for one of three Senior Social Work Practitioners involved in the pilot project to jointly screen domestic abuse referrals, which will be expanded on later in this report. BSCB has also devised a multi agency domestic abuse training programme which is offered to all agencies in Birmingham.

4.3 Referrals

- 4.3.1 Domestic incidents currently account for over 22% of all recorded violent crimes across the West Midlands area. At the scene of an incident, Police Officers detail the level of risk that an adult poses to another adult using a WC392 form. In January 2010 West Midlands Police will be using a new risk assessment tool called the DASH tool. The DASH tool will enable frontline Police Officers to identify and record domestic abuse in relation to forced marriage or honour based crime and also ask about a child's safety within a domestic abuse environment, which was not previously recorded.
- 4.3.2 Where children or young people reside or normally reside in the household, historically WC392 forms have been passed to both the Children, Young People and Families Directorate and the relevant PCT to be logged and for the appropriate response to be identified. Birmingham PCTs and the Children, Young People and Families Directorate receive a high and increasing number of notifications from the police each year.
- 4.3.3 Members were informed that often health practitioners are the most appropriate to respond to domestic abuse referrals, as they can assess the impact on the health of the adult and child victim and can also offer support discreetly through universal service provision. However responding to domestic abuse referrals requires a high level of resources and health practitioners do not have the specialism or the remit to support all families experiencing domestic abuse.
- 4.3.4 From April 2008 - March 2009, Birmingham Children's Social Care received over 14,000 referrals, many of which were in the form of police notifications in relation to domestic abuse incidents. Background checks were undertaken on all referrals, however of the 14,000 referrals, around 9,000 were identified as inappropriate referrals as they did not meet the criteria for an Initial Assessment by a Social Worker. These referrals were logged for information but no support would have been offered from Social Work Teams directly and there was no consistent response identified to deal with these cases.

4.4 Joint Screening

- 4.4.1 Until recently Birmingham PCTs and Social Work Duty and Assessment Teams were separately undertaking time consuming background checks on police notifications. Members were told that



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services would often have to contact one another, the victim and sometimes schools and the police for additional information. Getting the correct information to make a judgement on the level of risk posed to the child and identifying the response required was time consuming, lacked co-ordination and was inconsistent across the city.

- 4.4.2 Whilst the review was taking place, a process of Joint Screening by the Police, the Children, Young People and Families Directorate and the three Birmingham PCTs was being gradually implemented. Joint Screening enables services to undertake one assessment of the case between them and identify the most appropriate agency to respond. This is important as it speeds up the risk assessment process and reduces the resource implications for individual agencies. It also prevents repeat unnecessary contact with the victim by different agencies which may put the victim at more risk.
- 4.4.3 Members were informed throughout the review about the barriers to the implementation of Joint Screening as they emerged. Original difficulties with recruitment, location, access to IT systems, border issues and the accountability of service representatives, have reportedly been largely overcome.

4.5 Barnardo's Multi Agency Risk Assessment Tool

- 4.5.1 Assessing cases without identifying and putting in place an appropriate response is pointless. The strain that undertaking assessments places on services was obvious from evidence gathered yet evidence about the positive outcomes for the child or young person was not identified. The Barnardo's Multi Agency Risk Assessment Tool ('the Barnardo's Tool') will be used to combat this issue by ensuring all police notifications of domestic abuse, which involve children, are assessed consistently across the West Midlands and an appropriate level of response is agreed upon by all agencies.
- 4.5.2 West Midlands Police identified that implementation of the Barnardo's Tool, should improve support for young people under the age of eighteen who may be in abusive relationships with one another but do not fit comfortably with either adult or child services. Currently the legalities of domestic abuse mean that sixteen and seventeen year olds, including young parents, cannot be classed as victims of domestic abuse as the situation has to be identified as a child protection issue. The Barnardo's Tool should ensure that the most appropriate support is identified for these young people. **(R11)**
- 4.5.3 Members were informed that the Children, Young People and Families Directorate welcome the use of the Barnardo's Tool as it ensures that cases that do not meet the criteria for an Initial Assessment, continue to be identified and logged as previously, but are not referred to Social Work Duty and Assessment Teams inappropriately.
- 4.5.4 It was explained to Members that despite agreement by some voluntary organisations, the PCTs, the Children, Young People and Families Directorate, CAFCASS and the West Midlands Police to use the Barnardo's Tool in principle, it is in the early stages of implementation.



- 4.5.5 One issue identified by Members was the level of decision making skills and responsibility that Senior Social Work Practitioners have about whether a Child Protection Inquiry or an Initial Assessment should take place. Members were reassured that the Senior Social Work Practitioners within Joint Screening teams have the responsibility and expertise to make these decisions.
- 4.5.6 Concern was also expressed about the experience of Police Officers involved in the Joint Screening process. However representatives from the West Midlands Police confirmed with Members that this issue has been addressed with accepted protocols that reinforce the need for Child Abuse Investigators to undertake Joint Screening, rather than Police Officers with domestic abuse backgrounds.
- 4.5.7 Members and witnesses questioned how third sector Family Support services can contribute to the Joint Screening Process as these organisations are not represented by any of the agencies undertaking the screening. West Midlands Police stated that they are in dialogue with the voluntary sector to replicate best practice elsewhere. However it remains unclear who has the responsibility to feed in what information, which organisations should be consulted during background checks and how they can be identified to respond to a family's needs.
- 4.5.8 Despite questioning the process, Members received no evidence about how internal Children, Young People and Families early intervention programmes and education services can feed into the Joint Screening process or respond to cases. A child's educational engagement is not recorded on the Barnardo's Tool, but the West Midlands Police protocol states that this information should be considered when screening cases. **(R8)**

4.6 Common Assessment Framework

- 4.6.1 Use of the Barnardo's Tool provides the opportunity for low risk cases to be offered support by a single agency, or co-ordinated support through the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process. The CAF can be used by professionals to identify a child or young person's additional needs that are not being met by universal services.
- 4.6.2 The use of the CAF has been recommended following Serious Case Reviews that have taken place in Birmingham. Domestic abuse is a complex issue which often results in both child and adult victims requiring a variety of support from different agencies. Use of the CAF may therefore be very helpful as CAF has the potential to co-ordinate support for children and young people and empower victims to receive support.
- 4.6.3 Members were informed that the Children, Young People and Families Directorate would like to effectively engage the third sector to offer more targeted support. The use of the CAF process is a key way of achieving this, as the most appropriate support for the family, whoever provides it, can be identified and put in place early on. By preventing problems escalating and co-ordinating actions so that agencies do not duplicate work, the use of CAF could also have a positive impact on the resources of the Children, Young People and Families Directorate.



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- 4.6.4 Members were informed that the CAF process is progressing but not fully established in Birmingham. There is no evidence of a CAF being undertaken in Birmingham following screening using the Barnardo's Tool and it remains unclear who has the responsibility to undertake the CAF referral within Joint Screening teams. In practice, it is therefore likely that children and young people residing in homes where domestic incidents have taken place, who are assessed as being at low risk, will continue to receive no co-ordinated support, other than the support which may be offered informally by health professionals. **(R9)**

4.7 Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences

- 4.7.1 Unlike low risk cases that often do not receive any co-ordinated family support, adults identified as being at high risk by the Police, can be referred to a Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) for discussion by the agencies involved. Members were informed that in Birmingham, the proportion of domestic abuse cases discussed at MARACs is very small in comparison to the number of reported incidents. However MARACs do tend to discuss a lot of cases involving pregnant women or children as more services are involved when this is the situation.
- 4.7.2 An evaluation of Birmingham MARACs which took place following a suggestion from the 2008 'Domestic Violence' scrutiny overview, highlighted that although generally information sent out from Police Public Protection Units includes the child victim's details, there are occasions when only the adult victim's name and date of birth is circulated. Without relevant information about children, agencies involved in the MARAC are unable to identify them or the support that they may be receiving. Members were informed that the introduction of the Barnardo's Tool and the use of the new DASH Tool will improve this situation, as police officers will receive greater training on the need to gather accurate information in relation to children residing in the household.
- 4.7.3 Representation from agencies at MARACs varies between one MARAC to another. The evaluation of MARACs identified that Chairs of MARACs were concerned that agencies are not always represented when a MARAC would value their presence and advice. The ability of representatives from the Children and Young People and Families Directorate to attend was of particular concern.
- 4.7.4 It was reported to Members that within the Children Young People and Families Directorate, Education Services are particularly under represented at MARACs and they therefore lack information about a child's welfare, attainment and attendance, which hinders decision making. Members were told that a system had evolved, which had proved impractical, whereby one Education Social Worker tried to attend all nine Birmingham MARACs, in addition to her main responsibility of supporting children and young people living in temporary residence, refuge or hostel accommodation in the city.
- 4.7.5 In response to concerns from Members, the Children and Young People and Families Directorate Service Director for Strategy and Commissioning confirmed that it is the role of the Social Work Duty and Assessment Team Managers to attend MARACs to represent all services within the Directorate. However the ability of Team Managers to effectively represent the Directorate is of serious concern. In particular Members identified the following issues:



- The ability of Team Managers to interpret data received from schools correctly;
- The already heavy workloads of Team Managers;
- The current lack of attendance of Team Managers at MARACs;
- The lack of consistency between Police Protection Units and Social Work Team area borders
- The lack of official protocols on how Education Services and other Directorate services can feed into the MARAC process via Team Managers. **(R12)**

5 Minimising Disruption

5.1 Empowering the Adult Victim

- 5.1.1 It is vital to support and empower a non-abusive parent as this is often a very effective way of promoting the child's welfare.
- 5.1.2 The Children, Young People and Families Directorate Social Work Teams refer adult victims of domestic abuse to specialist domestic abuse services, such as Bharosa and BSWA for support; however their main priority is to protect the child. If a child continues to be at risk, Child Protection Procedures have to take place. This can be very costly for all and risks further victimising the adult victim.
- 5.1.3 Before crisis situations are reached, universal services such as Children's Centres and Parenting Programmes in the City, work to empower all parents/carers including those who are victims of domestic abuse. Children's Centres support parents to access training, work and childcare to improve self confidence and financial independence. The new evidence based Parenting Programmes also enable adult victims of domestic abuse to develop their feelings of self worth and confidence. In addition by undertaking CAFs, professionals can empower parents/carers as they have to agree for a CAF to be undertaken and are then assisted in accessing services.
- 5.1.4 Despite the provision available to empower parents/carers, when issues go beyond their service remit, universal services make referrals to and work with specialist services as required by safeguarding procedures. Ashram and BSWA gave evidence to the Committee about the importance of empowering the adult victim, to help them develop a positive attitude to life and their self image, to help them to make the right choices to adequately safeguard themselves and their children and to improve their own life chances.
- 5.1.5 Whilst it is important that challenging the perpetrator's behaviour is not the sole responsibility of the victim, it is essential that in taking a stance against the perpetrator, the community does not disempower the victim. In March 2009, Members heard evidence that not all victims are informed about their referral to a MARAC or given the opportunity to contribute and therefore become suspicious of services and less likely to contact the police for help in the future. This issue was previously the subject of a suggestion in the 2008 'Domestic Violence' Scrutiny overview report. Members of that Review tracked the report in July 2009 and were informed that a scheme was

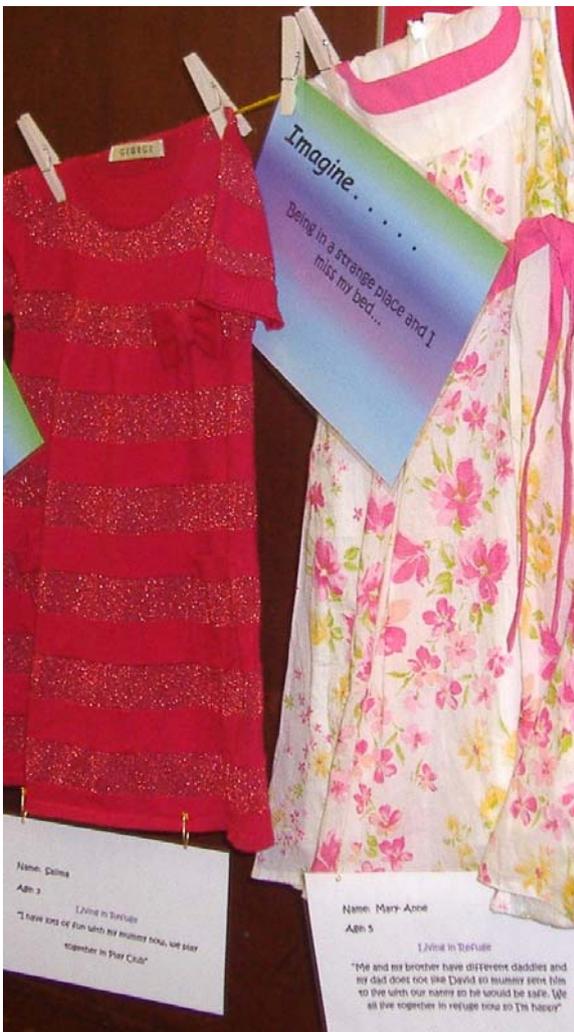


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launched in June 2009 to bring together three teams of specialist domestic violence staff to work in clusters across Birmingham to address this issue.

5.2 Services and Play Provision

5.2.1 The Safer Birmingham Partnership estimated that in 2007-2008 around 573 children and young people had been resident in Birmingham's domestic violence refuges. Victims of domestic abuse who choose not to, or cannot access refuge accommodation, may be housed by the Housing Department in emergency accommodation within one of four homeless centres or in alternative accommodation.



Above: The experience of a child living in a Birmingham refuge.

5.2.2 The Education Welfare Service identified that 90% of children living in temporary residence facilities in the city are of statutory school age. Despite the turmoil these families go through, the Education Social Worker reported that most mothers are highly motivated to ensure their children continue in school, but many will have concerns that their children cannot be traced. To ensure confidentiality, Birmingham has one Education Social Worker who has 20 hours each week allocated to linking with all hostels, refuges and temporary residence facilities to ensure that children and young people have continued access to education.

5.2.3 With such limited time designated to supporting school aged children living in temporary residence facilities, the Education Social Worker relies on Children's Workers within refuges and hostels to arrange access to education. Members were informed that the Housing Directorate funds two Children's Development Workers in the city to support children living in the four homeless centres to access education. By using Children's Workers in hostels and refuges to undertake work, the Education Social Worker has more time to support families living in other forms of temporary residence facilities where no other support may be available. **(R13)**



5.2.4 Representatives from the three Birmingham PCTs reported to Members that hostel and refuge staff help them to stay in contact with families escaping domestic abuse. This is essential as evidence from South Birmingham NHS PCT stated that the high mobility of children creates a risk that they will be separated from their health records which may contain vital information on them since birth, which is necessary in some cases to safeguard them.



Above: Cllr Sutton looking at the items that children have to leave behind when they escape.

5.2.5 Children living in BSWA refuge accommodation were invited to safely share their experiences with Members at the Vulnerable Children's Committee event in September. The children's views were displayed on a washing line attached to their clothing and each child provided a gift of a plant and a bookmark to each Member which explained how they felt. Members learnt that play opportunities in refuge are essential as they welcome children into their new environment, help them to make friends and give them the opportunity to have fun in a safe place, encourage social, emotional and physical development, restore the bond between the adult and child victim, provide an opportunity for children to express their feelings and emotions, enable the adult victim to have the time to attend meetings alone and ensure that children are not further exposed to the fear of domestic abuse, by having to listen to the adult victim reliving their experiences or by being used as an interpreter.

5.2.6 Members were particularly concerned about children being used as interpreters as on visits to children's Social Work Teams they have heard that access to appropriate interpreters is not always quickly or easily obtained.

5.2.7 Despite the important role of the Children's Worker in ensuring a child's continued access to education, health services, play opportunities and safe childcare, The Safer Birmingham Partnership presented research undertaken by BSWA which demonstrated that there is a deficit of ten refuge Children's Worker posts in the city. Without adequate child to adult ratios Members were informed that Ofsted cannot register settings.

5.2.8 The Safer Birmingham Partnership Domestic Violence Co-ordinator stated that Children's Worker funding is extremely difficult to come by in the current climate. This issue was identified in the 'Domestic Violence' Scrutiny Overview report in April 2008, however to date no additional resources have been identified to fund Children's Worker posts. Throughout this review Members



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have seen no evidence of a joint commissioning strategy for this vital work, despite the reliance on Children's Workers by the PCTs and the Children, Young People and Families Directorate. **(R14)**

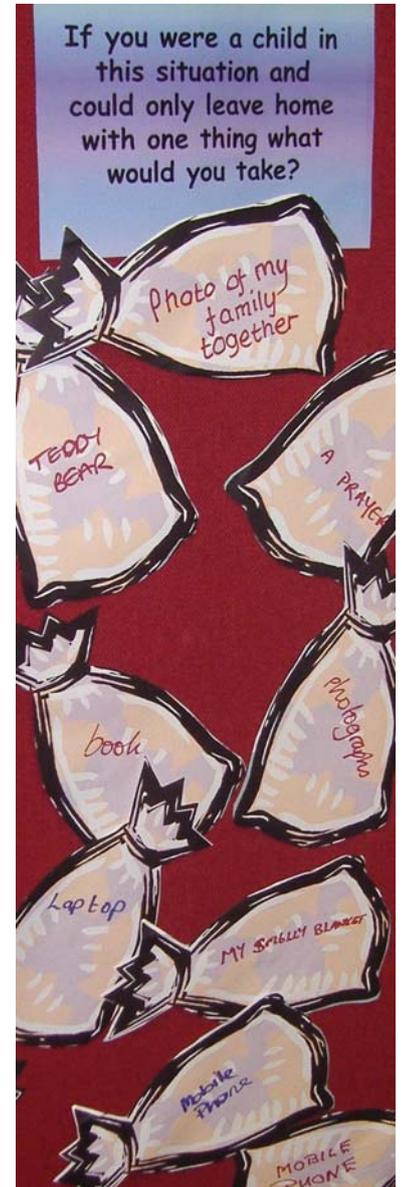
5.3 Safe Housing

5.3.1 The Education Welfare Service identified that although it is difficult to establish exact figures as not all facilities provide information, at one time up to 800 children and young people may be living in temporary residence facilities in the city. Many of these children and young people will be the victims of domestic abuse.

5.3.2 Ashram, BSWA and Bharosa identified the lack of support for families with No Recourse to Public Funds. Due to their insecure immigration status and their resulting inability to receive benefits, they cannot access any form of emergency accommodation, including refuges. These victims are left with a stark choice, stay and live with the abuse, or leave and risk destitution. **(R15)**

5.3.3 The Housing Directorate commissions BSWA to run the Home Options scheme. This is important as victims of domestic abuse may not leave the perpetrator due to fears about homelessness and how they will support their children. Through the Home Options scheme, victims of domestic abuse have somewhere to turn to discuss their options, which includes legal, financial and housing advice, which may encourage them to escape the perpetrator.

5.3.4 One option available to domestic abuse victims living in any type of housing tenure is the Sanctuary Scheme which enables victims to remain living in their homes safely. Agencies make the home safe by, for example, changing locks so that the perpetrator cannot gain access, creating a safe room, fitting panic alarms, and serving the perpetrator with a Civil Order preventing them coming near the house. Support workers and police carefully explain the process to children and what to do in an event of an emergency. Children and young people benefit from the scheme as they do not have to leave their friends, family, toys, pets and school to escape the abuse and are able to continue to live in their familiar environment, safely and free from fear.



Above: Members consider what they would take if they were a child forced to flee domestic abuse.

5.4 Outreach Family Support

5.4.1 Many victims continue to live with the perpetrator or are unable to, or choose not to, live in specialist domestic abuse refuges. It is important that these victims have safe access to support services to help children and young people achieve the five Every Child Matters outcomes.



- 5.4.2 Members received information about the work of the Family Nurse Partnership which is an intensive nurse led prevention and early intervention programme for first time young parents and their children. Nurses use practical activities and discussion with parents and family members to help them understand how their behaviour affects the baby, help them to develop emotionally and build positive relationships. Of the twenty young families currently on the scheme, two have disclosed issues of domestic abuse.
- 5.4.3 Survey results demonstrated that Children's Centres in Birmingham are implementing programmes which work with parents to emphasise positive models of parenting which include challenging domestic abuse issues. Respondents to the survey also revealed that Children's Centres are well aware of the impact of domestic abuse in their community and are keen to tackle the issue. In cases where domestic abuse may be an issue, Children's Centres will work carefully to assist in enabling safe contact sessions, to facilitate continued relationships and promote better outcomes for children.
- 5.4.4 Members have received little information about how school aged children and young people and their families affected by domestic abuse can currently access co-ordinated family support, other than that which may be provided on an ad hoc basis by Specialist Domestic Abuse services, School Nurses or the Youth Service.
- 5.4.5 The Children and Young People and Families Directorate recognises the importance of specialist services and recommended to Members that the Directorate should undertake more work to effectively engage the third sector to offer more targeted support. Building relationships with the third sector is essential as services need to work together to ensure a continuum of support to families. Children's Centres, the Police and representatives from the Birmingham PCTs informed Members that they regularly refer parents/carers to BSWA and other specialist domestic abuse support organisations.
- 5.4.6 Ashram reported that between April 2006 and March 2008, 1328 children were referred to them with their parent or carer because of domestic abuse. Members were told that the children referred displayed signs of anger, behavioural problems, withdrawal, bedwetting, self harm, and required 1:1 specialist support.
- 5.4.7 Despite the reliance on partners of statutory bodies, representatives from both BSWA and Ashram described significant issues regarding access to funding. Ashram reported that they have one Children's Worker post funded through Supporting People which is administered by the Housing Directorate, and have received funding from the Local Area Agreement. However they do not have the resources to support all children referred to their service.
- 5.4.8 The Safer Birmingham Partnership reported that there are only two funded specialist domestic abuse family support worker posts in Birmingham. Throughout this review Members have received no evidence of an up to date, consistent city-wide commissioning strategy to fund this vital work. This is in spite of evidence from the PCTs, the Children, Young People and Families Directorate and partners about the resources required to provide support to the victims of domestic abuse.
- (R14)**



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Right: Cllr Corns discussing the impact of domestic abuse on children with a Support Worker

6 Conclusions

6.1 Awareness Raising

- 6.1.1 The committee heard about the benefits of engaging young people in developing awareness raising campaigns as it increases their knowledge of the issue and leads to new and innovative ways of spreading the message about healthy relationships. However there is currently no long term city wide campaign targeted at young people.
- 6.1.2 The benefits of the whole community approach to raising awareness, involving parents/carers, teaching staff, local people and organisations was highlighted to Members. Members have heard how BSCB and the Health Education Service provide training sessions to ensure that people have the confidence and knowledge to respond to disclosures. However partnership working in the provision of awareness raising programmes appears to take place on an ad hoc basis depending on what local funding is available, a schools commitment to raising awareness about the issue, and the commitment and resources of local services and organisations to work together. No evidence was presented to the committee about how services are formally working together to provide whole community approaches and agree on core principles of domestic abuse training. There is currently no central commissioning budget for this vital work and awareness raising programmes are taking place inconsistently across the city.

6.2 Minimising Disruption

- 6.2.1 It has been brought to Members attention that the role of the Education Social Worker is often an advisory one, with Children's Workers taking on the unofficial responsibility for arranging education for children living in refuge. It is also clear that Birmingham PCTs rely on in house refuge/hostel support workers to help them maintain contact with families. However evidence shows that there is a significant lack of Children's Workers in the city.
- 6.2.2 Safe housing provision is essential for those escaping domestic abuse, however in Birmingham not all families affected by domestic abuse can be accommodated in local refuge facilities. Agencies expressed particular concern for victims with no recourse to public funds.



- 6.2.3 Despite a clear need for services to have specialist domestic abuse agencies to work with and refer victims to, and a desire to engage with the third sector to offer targeted support, those who presented evidence to the Committee identified that they lacked the resources to work with all children and young people referred to them. There is no evidence of a consistent city-wide commissioning strategy to support the children, young people and families living with domestic abuse in Birmingham, despite the resources required to do so.
- 6.2.4 Although there is a variety of counselling services for children and young people in Birmingham, there appears to be little co-ordination of the provision for those affected by domestic abuse. The committee has heard that children and young people experience inappropriately long waits to access specialist counselling services. Counselling services commissioned by CAMHS and practitioners working within CAMHS do not record domestic abuse disclosures made within therapy sessions so it is currently impossible to establish the resources required to provide timely counselling support to the child victims of domestic abuse.

6.3 Working Together – The Children, Young People and Families Directorate

- 6.3.1 Despite the commitment of Children, Young People and Families Directorate staff to challenge the issue of domestic abuse and make lives better for victims, the Directorate has no Lead Officer, with the responsibility to co-ordinate work in relation to domestic abuse. As a result, work to tackle the issue is disjointed, and ensuring those affected by domestic abuse can achieve the Every Child Matters Outcomes is not prioritised.
- 6.3.2 Communication both internally and with external partners on the issue of domestic abuse is limited. There is currently no-one from the Children's Social Care attending the BDVF, and best practice or findings (such as the research undertaken by the Youth Service, Base K/S) is not formally shared across the Directorate or with partners.
- 6.3.3 Although the new Joint Screening process and MARACs enable agencies to co-ordinate action and share information quickly and efficiently, information sharing between the different Children, Young People and Families Directorate Services appears to be problematic. No information was presented on how Children's Centres, Parenting Programmes and Schools can feed information into the Joint Screening Process via Senior Social Work Practitioners; or how information can be fed from these services into MARACs via Duty and Assessment Team Managers.
- 6.3.4 The Children, Young People and Families Directorate expressed a desire to engage with partners to ensure early intervention in cases of domestic abuse. However referrals to partner agencies in relation to domestic abuse cases are not centrally recorded, the outcomes of work are not measured and CAF/CASS reported a lack of communication from the Children, Young People and Families Directorate about the outcomes of notifications to them. In addition there have been no recorded CAFs as a result of the joint screening process, which would enable third sector organisations to become involved in supporting victims.



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6.4 Working together – City-wide Co-ordination

- 6.4.1 The Pan Birmingham Domestic Violence Strategy 2006-2009 demonstrates Birmingham's commitment to support children and young people in the City affected by domestic abuse. However with only one Domestic Violence Co-ordinator currently in post, and no post focussing on the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people, it is difficult to maintain a focus on the children and young people affected, to co-ordinate activities in the city, and report progress.
- 6.4.2 BSCB has identified domestic abuse as a key safeguarding issue and has actively supported positive developments in the screening of referrals and provides essential training opportunities. BSCB has demonstrated its commitment to working with specialist domestic abuse organisations by tracking the progress of the Pan Birmingham Domestic Violence Strategy and attending BDVF. However Members have identified that there is currently a lack of involvement and representation of the specialist domestic abuse organisations on BSCB and that there is scope to develop this relationship further.
- 6.4.3 Members have learnt that undertaking assessments of police notifications is in itself not the answer to problems faced by families experiencing domestic abuse. The introduction of the Barnardo's Tool is clearly important in ensuring that agencies identify appropriate levels of support to respond to domestic abuse referrals. However although only in its early stages of implementation, Members have received no evidence of how outcomes for Children and Young People and their families, including sixteen and seventeen year olds, have and will be improved due to the implementation of the tool.

6.5 Summary

- 6.5.1 Throughout the evidence gathering sessions the importance of tackling the impact of domestic abuse and the commitment of individual agencies and partnerships to do so has been demonstrated. However without the correct commissioning strategies in place, the resources to ensure city-wide co-ordination, and an official lead from the Children, Young People and Families Directorate, responding to children and young people's needs who experience and witness domestic abuse will continue to be an ad hoc process.



Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference

Our key question:	How are children and young people in Birmingham affected by domestic abuse?
1. How is O&S adding value through this work?	<p>The piece of work will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to the City Council's strategic outcome 'Stay safe in a clean, green city' – ensuring that vulnerable people are effectively safeguarded, including children, young people and victims of domestic violence. • Contribute to ensuring that Every Child Matters outcomes are met and that the Children and Young People's directorate vision: to create a child and family-friendly city in which all children and young people feel secure and enjoy living, learning, developing and achieving together, can be fulfilled. • Support the work being undertaken by the Birmingham Inter-agency Domestic Violence Forum through the Pan-Birmingham Domestic Violence Strategy 2006-2009 which sets out a commitment to reduce domestic violence and to help make Birmingham a safer place for victims/survivors and their children.
2. What needs to be done?	<p>This review will examine what is being done both nationally and locally to tackle the issue of domestic abuse with a specific focus on the impact on children and young people. We will look at different models of intervention, including the Duluth model and examples of good practice in other local authorities.</p> <p>The review will address what the local priorities should be and what are the next phases in improving the services and long term outcomes for children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse.</p> <p>The key lines of enquiry that this work proposes to follow in order to achieve its outcomes are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How educated are children and young people about the different forms of domestic abuse, including forced marriage, and do they have a clear understanding that domestic abuse is not acceptable and know how to access support. • How services are working together to ensure the early identification and intervention of children and young people who are victims of, or witnesses to, domestic abuse. • How services are working together to share information and perform risk assessments to ensure the ongoing safety of children and young people. • How the disruption to a child or young person's life who is escaping domestic abuse is minimised by Birmingham City Council directorates and its partners, including third sector organisations. • How effective support services are for children and young people in Birmingham who have been victims, or witnesses, of domestic abuse. • The extent of which children and young people who have experienced domestic violence have access to advocacy services, are listened to and involved in decision making processes. <p>To conduct this review we will engage with officers from the Children, Young People and Families directorate and also representatives from health services, the West Midlands police service, CAFCASS, primary and secondary schools in Birmingham, Birmingham Community Safety Partnership, Birmingham Inter-</p>



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What needs to be done? <i>continued</i>	agency Domestic Violence Forum and third sector organisations such as Birmingham Women's Aid, Ashram Housing, Birmingham Crisis Centre and the Salvation Army.
3. What timescale do we propose to do this in?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence gathering will be undertaken from February to July 2009. • The draft report will be discussed by the Committee in September 2009. • Report to the City Council meeting in November 2009.
4. What outcomes are we looking to achieve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To advise the City Council on the best ways to ensure that the children and young people of Birmingham are safeguarded from domestic abuse • To advise the City Council on what support needs to be in place to minimise the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people who are victims of, and witnesses to it. • To advise the City Council on the work that should be done with children and young people to ensure that the prevalence of domestic abuse is reduced in the future.
5. What is the best way to achieve these outcomes and what routes will we use?	Scrutiny review going to Council after considering the evidence from officers from the Children, Young People and Families Directorate and partner agencies such as the police, health services and Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid who have experience of running frontline services.

Member / Officer Leads

Lead Member:	Cllr Margaret Sutton
Lead Officer:	Rose Kiely
Expert Link Officer:	Elaine Webster

Time Frame for Core Phases of the Review (SCRUTINY REVIEWS ONLY)

Meetings and evidence-gathering sessions:	From February to July 2009 monthly evidence gathering sessions will take place.
Drafting the report:	The draft report will be written and agreed by members in July and August 09.
Consideration of the draft report by the Committee:	In September 2009 the wider Committee will have the opportunity to read and comment upon the draft report and amendments will be made and agreed.
8-Day rule: Executive Comment:	During September and October 2009 the Executive is requested to provide comment on the report and to make recommendations and further amendment suggestions.
Reporting to the City Council:	It is anticipated that in November 2009 the report will reach a City Council meeting.



Appendix 2 – Methodology

The review topic was initially suggested by Cllr Margaret Sutton Chair of the Committee. Pam Cohen, previously of the NSPCC and Pat Da-Silva, Senior Education Social Worker, also identified the issue at the 2008 Children, Young People and Families Directorate Conference.

Members received presentations and written information from City Council Officers in the Children, Young People and Families Directorate and an Officer from the Housing and Constituencies Directorate.

Representatives from partner organisations including the three Birmingham Primary Care Trusts, the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, West Midlands Police, The Safer Birmingham Partnership, Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board, East Education Action Zone, Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid, Ashram Housing Association and the Saheli Empowerment Programme gave evidence to the Committee. Loudmouth Education and Training also engaged Members in an example of a school theatre awareness raising programme.

The Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service, the Family Nurse Partnership Programme, the Adults and Communities Bharosa Service, the Children, Young People and Families Children's Centres Support Team and Birmingham Women's Policy Unit provided written evidence to inform the review.

All Children's Centres in Birmingham were asked in a survey about the preventative work that they undertake to tackle the issue of domestic abuse with the families in their area. Eleven survey responses were received, representing the views and experiences of thirteen different Children's Centres.

Members had the opportunity to discuss with young people their awareness raising work and experiences, at an event in September. Northfield Young People's Forum (INVOLVE), talked to Members about their work with the Lantern Project to develop ways to convey messages to young people. With support from a Youth Worker, a pupil from a local school also read a poem to Members that she devised at the 'Is This Love?' conference, which endorsed healthy relationships to young people. A young person and Youth Leader from Base K/S presented information about services available to support young people who experience domestic abuse in Kingstanding. Posters, artwork and the opinions of children and young people living in BSWA refuge accommodation were displayed and Members had the opportunity to think about items they would have to leave behind if they were a child forced to flee. Pictures taken at the event have been used throughout this report. To ensure safety, children living in refuge did not attend the event, but their views were represented by having their clothes hung behind their comments on a washing line.

The Committee would like to express their thanks to all who have supported them in undertaking this important review. In particular Members would like to thank Elaine Webster Assistant Head of Child Protection and Expert Link Officer and Paula Harding Domestic Violence Co-ordinator for the City, for attending meetings and providing valuable advice. Thank you also to Birmingham Crisis Centre and the Salvation Army for allowing Scrutiny Officers to meet with Children's Workers and discuss their work.

Committee Members are Cllr Margaret Sutton - Committee Chair, Cllr Jon Hunt – Vice Chair, Cllr Susan Axford, Cllr Len Clark, Cllr Emily Cox, Cllr Zoe Hopkins, Cllr Barbara Wood and Cllr Gwyn Neilly, until May 2009 Cllr Graham Green, Cllr Dorothy Hargreaves and Cllr Mahmood Hussain and from June 2009, Cllr Margaret Byrne, Cllr Reginald Corns and Cllr Hendrina Quinnen.



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Appendix 3 – Glossary of Terms

Ashram Housing Association (Ashram)

Ashram is an inter-cultural Midlands based agency which provides community inspired housing and services. Ashram is an agency, for social inclusion and social impact, developing person centred services to meet local people's needs, choices and aspirations.

Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid (BSWA)

BSWA aims to provide services that are sensitive to and meet the needs of individual women and children. BSWA listens to, supports and gives victims time and space to decide what they want to do.

Birmingham Domestic Violence Forum (BDVF)

BDVF has been established since 1996 and is a multi agency partnership working strategically to end domestic violence against women and children. BDVF is tasked with implementing the Pan Birmingham Domestic Violence Strategy 2006-2009.

Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB)

BSCB is a statutory board which has been set up as part of the Every Child Matters reforms, and requires all organisations that work with children to cooperate to keep children safe from harm. The BSCB agrees how local services and professionals should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

Birmingham has a range of CAMHS that aim to support and help children and young people who are experiencing emotional and mental health problems.

Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS)

The role of CAFCASS is to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, give advice to the family courts, make provision for children to be represented and provide information, advice and support to children and their families. The main types of cases in which the Courts ask CAFCASS to help in are when, there is no agreement between parents/carers over arrangements for their child; Social Services have become involved and children may be removed from their parent's care for their safety or when children could be adopted.

Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

The CAF is a shared assessment tool for use across all children's services and all local areas in England. It aims to help early identification of need and promote co-ordinated service provision. The assessment process encourages practitioners to consider the needs of the child or young person and identify and co-ordinate support for them.



Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment Tool (DASH Tool)

The DASH Tool helps front line practitioners identify the level of risk posed to victims in cases of domestic abuse, stalking and honour based violence. The tool asks a number of questions which provide a checklist to identify the risks. Although using the tool provides valuable information about the risks that children are living with, it is not a full risk assessment for children.

Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs)

A MARAC allows agencies to share up to date risk information, make an assessment of a victim's needs and ensure services for all those involved in a domestic violence case: victim, children and perpetrator are put in place.

Pan Birmingham Domestic Violence Strategy (the Strategy)

The Strategy harnesses the commitment of Birmingham agencies to address domestic violence and build a safer, stronger and healthier city for all. The Strategy established a vision and commitment to reduce domestic violence and to make Birmingham safe for those experiencing domestic violence through co-ordinated and comprehensive multi-agency action.

Primary Care Trusts (PCTs)

Primary Care Trusts manage primary care services, which are the services that you see first when you have a health problem e.g. your doctor, dentist, optician, pharmacist etc. PCTs decide what health services a local community needs, and they are responsible for providing them. In Birmingham there are three PCTs, these are Heart of Birmingham Teaching PCT, South Birmingham NHS and NHS Birmingham East and North.

The Barnardo's Multi Agency Risk Assessment Tool (Banardo's Tool)

The Barnardo's Tool is used to assess the severity of risk posed by domestic violence within families where children are present. It aims to help practitioners make decisions about the risks presented for children and to plan effective interventions for the family.

The Safer Birmingham Partnership

The Safer Birmingham Partnership is a multi-agency organisation that includes West Midlands Police, Birmingham City Council, West Midlands Fire Service, Birmingham Primary Care Trusts, Third Sector Assembly, Probation Service and a range of other agencies. The Safer Birmingham Partnership ensures the delivery of a range of community safety activity which is aimed at making Birmingham even safer. The partnership has existed for over ten years in accordance with the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 which requires statutory agencies to work together to reduce crime and improve community safety.

Third Sector

The Third Sector refers to a range of organisations, which occupy the space between the State and the private sector. Small local community and voluntary groups, registered charities, foundations, trusts, social enterprises and co-operatives can be described as third sector organisations.



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