



Managing Inclusion Briefing 16

Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence is an issue that occurs despite culture, sexual orientation, age, class and religion. However, despite its prevalence it can still be considered a taboo subject, and something that occurs 'behind closed doors'.

Victims can often be reluctant to report cases. This can be for a number of reasons such as believing that the violence is their fault, fear that the violence will get worse if their partner finds out they reported it, or fear that they will not be taken seriously.

The Government defines domestic violence as "Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who

are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality."

Space East works with and supports many frontline agencies who work with victims of domestic violence across the East of England. We aim to provide these agencies with support and information about issues affecting the sector. This briefing aims to:

- 1 Provide a general outline of the issues surrounding domestic violence
- 1 Inform frontline workers of new initiatives
- 1 Share information on good practice projects and partnerships from across the region.

The Statistics:

Domestic violence is significantly underreported, but statistics from the Home Office show that domestic violence:

- 1 Accounts for more than 16% of all violent crimes
- 1 Has more repeat victims than any other crime
- 1 Claims the lives of two women each week
- 1 Is the largest cause of morbidity worldwide in women aged 19-44. That makes it greater than war, cancer and motor vehicle accidents.
- 1 Costs in excess of £23 billion a year 'Refuge' a national domestic violence organisation, has found that in 90% of domestic violence cases, there are children in the same or next room. They also report that on average a woman will be assaulted 35 times before reporting it to the police.

Statistics from Women's Aid show that:

- 1 Every day there are over 7000 women and children sheltering in refuges in the UK
- 1 Domestic abuse is a factor of at least one in four suicide attempts by women.
- 1 An incident of domestic abuse occurs every 26 seconds in the UK

The Issues:

Why someone would stay in an abusive relationship can often be difficult for outsiders to understand. However, there can be complex emotional reasons such as shame, fear and humiliation, and more practical reasons such as finances, children and accommodation.

Domestic abuse can have a debilitating effect on a victim's self esteem and confidence. This often works in the perpetrators favour as the victim may think that they are unable to cope on their own,

that they are worthless or that they deserve the abuse.

A study by Crisis in 2006 found that fleeing domestic violence was the second most cited cause of homelessness. For many people persuading their abusive partner to leave is not an option and few have the finances to find alternative accommodation. They can be left with the choice of homelessness or a life of fear and abuse.

1 Domestic violence among ethnic minorities

While women and children from ethnic minorities are just as likely to be victims of domestic violence they may respond differently.

Some women can be subjected to culturally specific forms of violence or harm such as female genital mutilation and forced marriages. Cultural barriers may also prevent women from accessing help. This might include fear that others in the community will find out, or a fear of isolation from close knit family. Many may feel they are betraying or bringing shame on their community if they report abuse to the police. Language barriers can prevent the victim seeking support.

Many ethnic minority women and children have reported discrimination and stereotyping from services. There can be an attitude that ethnic minority cases are too complicated or based on cultural values, which can cause reluctance from some support workers to tackle them.

Insecure immigration status can mean that many women do not have access to public funds and for many being sent back to their country of origin could mean being disowned by their family, or blamed for the abuse. Often the perpetrators are aware of this and use it as part of their control.

1 Male victims and domestic violence

Statistics from the Home Office show that one in six men will be a victim of domestic

violence in their life time and that domestic violence claims the lives of 30 men each year.

While male victims of domestic abuse are protected by exactly the same laws as women, there can still be major reluctance to report the crime. This may be for similar reasons as female victims such as confusion, an attachment to the perpetrator and disbelief that it has occurred. However, for many men there can be additional factors largely attributed to stereotypes and a lack of understanding or information on the issue.

Victims of domestic violence are usually thought to be women which for many men can create stereotypes that may not only prevent them from seeking help, but when they do, can create a lack of sympathy from uninformed support workers. Domestic Violence can be incorrectly seen as solely physical and if there are no visible marks many men can trivialise the issue.

While the reports from male victims are on the increase, there is still a lack of specialised support for men.

1 Domestic Violence among Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT)

Domestic Violence also occurs among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) couples. Unfortunately this is often overlooked or not taken seriously.

Domestic Violence among LGBT couples follows a similar vein to that of heterosexual couples. However, there are a number of issues that are specific to LGBT couples. LGBT victims may be reluctant to report domestic violence due to claims that domestic violence is a part of LGBT relationships, threats to 'out' and a fear that it may be thought that they deserve the abuse. Victims may be hesitant to access support for fear of homophobia, a lack of specialised services and the need to 'out' oneself to access services.

What's New in the East of England?

Sanctuary Schemes

What is it?

In December 2006 Communities Secretary Ruth Kelly announced the government's plans to protect victims of domestic violence from being forced out of their homes and being made homeless. She stated that she would like every local authority in the country to offer Sanctuary Schemes as an option to their residents.

Thirty-one local authorities in the East of England are now planning to introduce a scheme which provides safe rooms for victims. The safe room or 'sanctuary' is tailor made to suit each individual's needs and is fitted within the home. It contains added security such as locks, alarms, security lights, reinforced door frames, emergency lights and CCTV. The addresses of the safe rooms will be flagged on police computers should an immediate incident occur.

The scheme is being funded as part of Local Authorities homelessness grants.

Who is it for?

The scheme is not means tested and is available to tenants or homeowners. It is available to anyone who has suffered or is suffering from domestic violence but does not feel safe within their home. It will only be available for victims of domestic abuse if it is considered safe enough for them to remain in the home and if the perpetrator no longer lives there.

What is the aim?

Uprooting victims and their children from their homes and re-housing them in temporary accommodation and refuges can be incredibly disruptive. This scheme focuses on supporting the victim and gives them the confidence to stay within their home provided it is considered safe.

How to access the scheme:

The Scheme can be accessed through the following local authorities and Police Domestic Violence Unit. Call 0845 456 4567 to be put through to the Domestic Violence Unit for your area.

Norfolk:

Breckland
Broadland
Great Yarmouth
Kings Lynn and West Norfolk
North Norfolk
Norwich

Suffolk:

Forest Heath
Ipswich
Mid Suffolk
St Edmundsbury
Suffolk Coastal
Waveney

Essex:

Basildon
Brentwood
Chelmsford
Colchester
Epping Forest
Harlow
Maldon
Southend-on-Sea

Tendering
Uttlesford

Cambridgeshire:

Fenland
Huntingdonshire
Peterborough

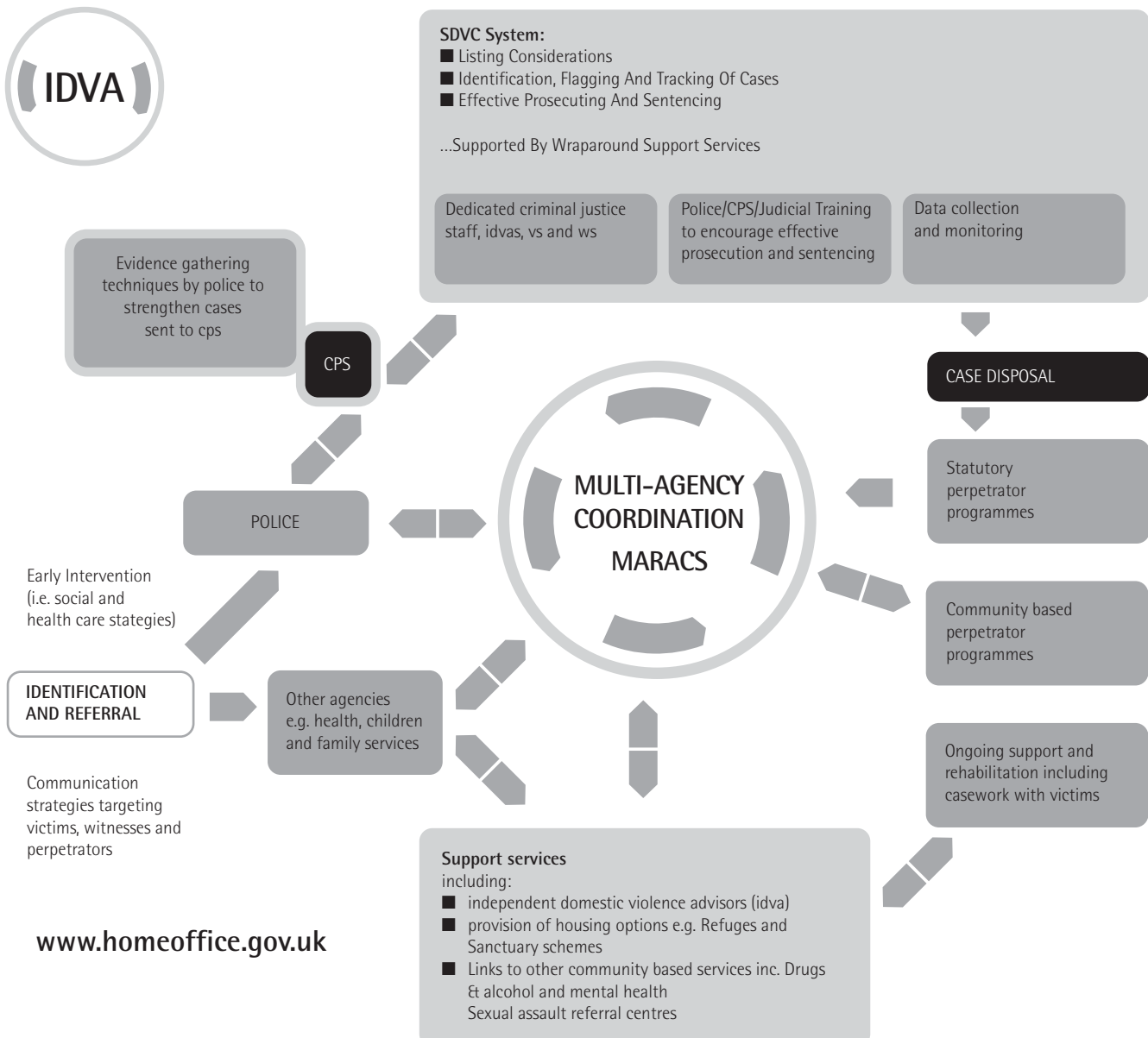
Bedfordshire:

Bedford
Mid Bedfordshire

Hertfordshire:

Dacorum
Luton
St Albans
Welwyn Hatfield

Specialist Domestic Violence Court (SDVC) Programme



What is it?

As part of a new government initiative the number of courts across England and Wales equipped to deal with domestic violence will increase from 28 to more than 50. The courts use specialist measures such as fast tracking and clustering domestic violence cases so that they run more efficiently. Some courts have separate entrances and waiting rooms so that victims do not have to face the persecutor.

The courts promote information sharing and a combined response from police, crown prosecutors, magistrates, probation and specialised support agencies. Domestic violence cases are identified, tracked and have risk assessments carried out in order to prosecute the offender.

What is the aim?

By providing a support and advice network the scheme encourages victims to give evidence in court against their abusers, while giving the victim confidence in the law. It also urges victims and friends/family that they have confided in to seek support from the national domestic violence helpline.

The campaign aims to raise awareness of the help and support that is available and wants to encourage people to report incidences of domestic violence. It is expected that there will be a reduction in the number of repeat victimisations and a reduction in the number of statements that get retracted before they go to court.

The courts were successfully piloted in Cardiff and Caerphilly. The results showed:

1. A reduction in the number of cases lost before the trial
1. An increase in the number of domestic violence cases that were reported to the police that resulted in a court case.
1. An increase in the number of perpetrators convicted
1. More appropriate sentencing for perpetrators
1. Improved use of evidence so the case can continue if the victim withdraws their evidence
1. Better support for victims

Statistics from the Home Office show that since then, successful prosecutions have increased from 46 per cent in Dec 2003 to 65 per cent in Dec 2006, where specialist court prosecutions have risen to 71 per cent.

Where are they?

In the East of England there is one existing court in:

Cambridgeshire – Peterborough

This court opened on 1st July 2006 and operates on Tuesdays. If cases will run over the day they are rescheduled with priority. Agencies should contact Cambridgeshire Domestic Violence Advocacy Service for further information Phone: 01223 823 354 Sue Chapman is the Domestic Violence Coordinator. She can be contacted on sue.chapman@peterborough.gov.uk

As part of this new initiative three specialist domestic violence courts have been opened in the East of England in 2007. They are in:

Essex – Thurrock

The introduction of this court has been welcomed as Thurrock police estimate receiving approximately 150 reports of domestic violence per month. The court commenced operation on 4th April 2007 and runs every Wednesday. The court covers areas of Basildon, Brentwood and Thurrock.

Two Independent Domestic Violence Advisors have been recruited to support the victims.

The Domestic Violence Co-ordinator for Essex who is overseeing the project is Paula Ward. She is contactable on Email: paula-eadv@tiscali.co.uk or Phone: 01376 501 626/ 07717 766429

Norfolk – Norwich

The court commenced in April 2007 and takes place every Tuesday at Norwich Magistrates Court. Leeway Women's Aid (see 'Local and Regional Projects' for more information) has worked closely with the Norwich Magistrates Court to establish the SDVC, all court personnel are trained in domestic violence awareness and a Leeway worker is present every Tuesday morning. Advocacy workers provide assistance to women whose partners are being prosecuted and will support them throughout the entire court process.

Contact the court on: 01603 679500

Suffolk– Ipswich

Opened in April 2007 and is based at South East Suffolk Magistrates' Court. One court room will be used as the SDVC every Wednesday, except in certain circumstances case can be heard on a Friday. E.g. If an offence occurred Tuesday night, the victim would not be expected to wait 8 days, so the case could be heard on Friday.

Contact: County Domestic Violence Development Officer on 01473 613873 or email marianne.fellowes@suffolk.pnn.police.uk

Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs)

Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) are action teams that work together and share information on an individual victim's case. They involve key agencies, police, probation, education, health, housing and the voluntary sector.

The scheme is for high risk victims as decided by a risk assessment process. This means that all the organisations and services a victim comes into contact with are communicating and coordinated, and the victim is supported through the whole process.

MARACs were first piloted in Cardiff where between 2004 and 2006 the level of repeat victimisations dropped from 32 per cent to less than 10 per cent.

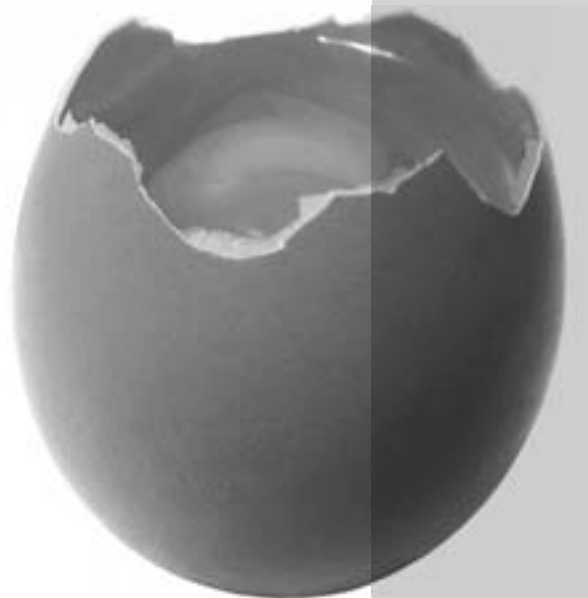
In March 2007 the government announced that £1.85million will be invested in MARACs, bringing the total across England and Wales to 100 by March 2008.

Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs)

The government has also funded a regional network of Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs). These are professionally trained people who are employed to support the victim from when they call the police through to the Specialist Domestic Violence Courts who MARACs up-to-date with the victim's circumstances.

During 2006/2007 the Home Office spent £3 million to employ and train IDVAs in the Specialist Domestic Violence Courts and Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) in sexual assault referral centres (SARCs) and specialised sexual violence voluntary sector organisations.

In 2007/2008 the Department for Constitutional Affairs have secured £3 million to fund IDVA posts in all the court areas and to continue ISVAs.



What else is happening in the region:

There are a number of partnerships and forums working in each region to prevent domestic violence. Most local authorities also have a domestic violence forum and action plan. They operate in partnership to deliver local objectives to reduce domestic violence and support its victims. Some are listed below.

Bedfordshire and Luton

Bedfordshire Domestic Violence

Partnership is comprised of statutory and voluntary agencies from across the region. The agencies are divided into three groups: Chief Officers Group (COG), Strategy Implementation Group (SIG) and a Domestic Violence Forum (DVF).

The partnership has developed the **Bedfordshire Domestic Violence Strategy 2006–2009** which aims to create a society in Bedfordshire where domestic violence is not tolerated, and to reduce the level and impact of violence in the county. Contact the Partnership on Ph: 01234 276 716 or email: bdvp@bedscc.gov.uk

Police Domestic Violence Units –

Bedfordshire police have specialist domestic violence workers who work from Luton, Dunstable, and Bedford Police Stations. They deal with the victims within their homes and liaise with other agencies in the field.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough The Cambridge & South Cambridgeshire Domestic Violence Task Group (CSCDVTG)

is a subgroup of the **Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs)**. CSCDVTG is the multi-agency group responsible for agreeing and implementing the Domestic Violence Strategy and Action Plan within Cambridge City and South Cambridge. Contact Simon Keress, Chair, on 01223 712800 or simon@safeathome.org.uk

Peterborough Domestic Violence Forum (PDVF) is a partnership of statutory and voluntary agencies that work to enable effective coordination of services for victims of domestic violence, and to empower them to take control of and rebuild their lives. PDVF will achieve this by:

1. Promoting joint working and action to prevent domestic violence in Peterborough.
1. Raising recognition and awareness about domestic violence and its wider impact within all agencies and communities.
1. Influencing the development of policy within all agencies.
1. Encouraging and supporting the development of appropriate and consistent services.

Essex, Thurrock and Southend-on-sea

Essex against domestic violence: the action plan 2005–2007

Aims to increase the number of successful prosecutions, tackle the overall incidence on domestic violence, increase support options, diversify the range of housing options and

introduce support training and liaison initiatives between agencies for effective service delivery for victims.

Huntingdonshire Domestic Violence Forum

– made up of a number of local agencies and organisations who aim to raise awareness of domestic violence and its effects on families and children, and improve services for those experiencing domestic abuse.

Epping Forest Domestic Violence Group

– part of the Crime Reduction Partnership this group has recently been re-launched with new Chair Caroline Skinner. The group aims to identify training needs for professionals within the district, develop a support programme for perpetrators, maintain up to date resource literature and to revise the directory of support services to target more vulnerable groups and inform victims of local support. They are currently looking at the issue of male victims in Epping Forest. Contact Libby Harrison, CDRP Admin Coordinator, Phone: 01992564616, Email: lharrison@vaef.org.uk

Hertfordshire

East Herts Domestic Violence Forum

– a multi agency approach to dealing with domestic violence. Aims to promote and maintain joint action, increase awareness, improve services and responses to victims of domestic violence. They also resolve to identify what resources are available and needed, prioritise what resources can be realistically obtained, create and action plan, and represent local and national organisations relating to domestic violence. Email: webadmin@eastherts.gov.uk Phone: 01279 655 261

Dacorum Domestic Violence Forum

– a partnership of local agencies, statutory and voluntary, which have an interest in domestic violence within Dacorum. Email: DDVL@hotmail.com Phone: 07765 020522

Stevenage and North Herts Domestic Violence Forum

– an inter-agency strategy on domestic violence which aims to promote and maintain joint action, increase community awareness of domestic violence, and seek to improve services for victims of domestic violence. In addition the forum resolves to identify and make recommendations on gaps in service delivery, seek domestic violence resources, and make representations at a local and national level. Email: eric.beach@nhst-pct.nhs.uk 01462 708470

Norfolk

South Norfolk Crime Reduction Partnership

– made up of Norfolk Constabulary, Norfolk Police Authorities, Norfolk Fire Service, Southern Norfolk

Primary Care Trust, Norfolk County Council and South Norfolk Council. The partnership have developed the **South Norfolk Crime Reduction Strategy 2005–2008** and an **Action Group**, made up of local statutory and voluntary agencies, to tackle domestic violence in South Norfolk.

Email: safety@s-norfolk.gov.uk, or Phone: 01508 533956/ 01508 533670

Norfolk County Domestic Violence Forum

– a multi agency partnership supported by Police, the courts, and the statutory and voluntary sector. They work to share good practice initiatives and identify gaps in the current structure. The forum is currently working on a Domestic Violence strategy for the county. Contact: Michelle on mcdowellm@norfolk.pnn.police.uk or 01953 424011

Suffolk

Ipswich and Coastal Domestic Violence Forum (ICDVF)

– supported by **Ipswich Borough Council and Ipswich Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership**, this Forum is made up of local statutory and voluntary agencies. Tel: 07851 056630

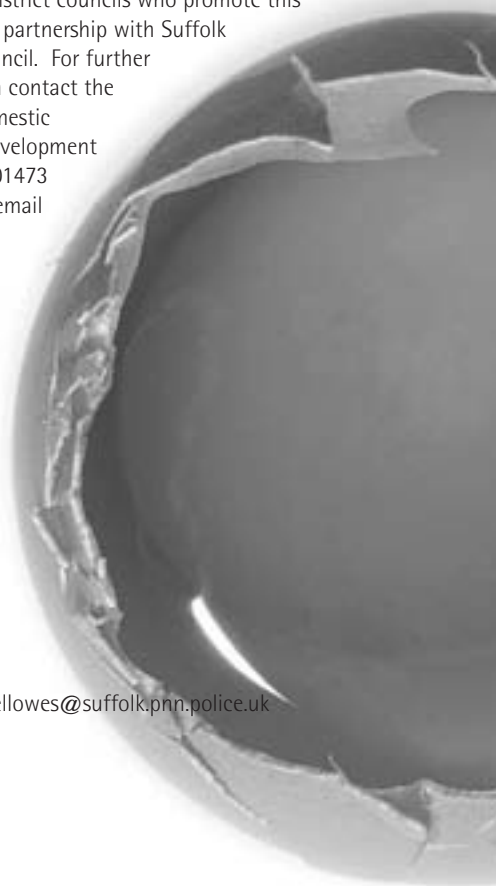
Email: icdvf@aol.com

Break the pattern: STOP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

An organisational and public awareness raising campaign which promotes the development of services for victims and their families. There are seven domestic violence forums in Suffolk: Babergh, Forest Heath, Ipswich, Mid Suffolk, St Edmundsbury, Suffolk Coastal & Waveney Borough/ District councils who promote this initiative in partnership with Suffolk County Council. For further information contact the

County Domestic Violence Development Officer on 01473 613873 or email

marianne.fellowes@suffolk.pnn.police.uk



Local and Regional Projects

Below is a list of just some of the projects working with victims of domestic violence in the East of England.

Bedfordshire and Luton Bedford Women's Refuge (Christian Family Care), Bedford

Bedford Refuge is a joint project with Granta Housing Society in Cambridge. The refuge has ten accommodation units with separate bedrooms and shared kitchen, bathroom, and living room facilities. The staff aim to empower the residents and diversity and equality is highly valued. The refuge receives Supporting People funding to provide resettlement information for residents hoping to return to community life. The project is inspected annually by Ofsted and has continually received praise for its high quality of work. Referrals are made through Police, Local Authority Homelessness Sections, Social Services, Samaritans, Women's Aid Refuges and Help lines, Housing Associations and self-referrals.

Luton Women's Aid

Luton Women's Aid runs five refuges in Luton, one of which is specialist for Asian women. They have a confidential helpline for women (ph: 01582 391856) and undertake outreach visits. They also provide training on domestic abuse to other agencies, colleges and groups.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Cambridge Women's Aid

Based at a central location in Cambridge city, CWA offers information, advice and ongoing practical and emotional support to women experiencing domestic abuse in strictest confidence. All women contacting CWA can access one to one support from a worker and group support at weekly coffee mornings. The Freedom Programme is available for women who want to look at how abusive relationships happen and to regain confidence and self-esteem.

CWA also offers emergency accommodation in a modern, purpose built refuge. The refuge is a safe house for women and children escaping domestic abuse. It is a confidential address where women can be sure they are safe, and where they and any children can access emotional and practical support from staff. Refuge is offered on a temporary basis and families are welcome to stay for a few days while they consider their options. If they decide to make a clean break from their abusive partner, they will normally stay in refuge until offered alternative accommodation. The maximum stay allowed in refuge is two years but the average stay is under 6 months. The new Cambridge refuge opened in 2005 and offers a high standard of en-suite accommodation and communal areas.

CWA offices are staffed during normal office hours and a worker is available on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year: 01223 460947

Cambridge Domestic Violence Advocacy Service, Parkside Police Station

An independent service offering crisis support and information to victims of domestic abuse. The advocacy workers there are able to help victims with decision making, advocate with agencies on the victims behalf, assist with safety planning, provide criminal and justice support and provide emotional support.

Essex, Thurrock and Southend-on-sea The Dove Project, Essex

Part of the Southend Women's Aid group this resource centre provides advice and support to women and their children who are victims of domestic violence. The trained volunteers are also able to provide advice on the availability of accommodation at women's refuges throughout the district. On Wednesdays legal advice is available from local solicitors; however, an appointment is necessary. A monthly workshop is open to men and women to raise awareness about domestic violence and to look at the behavioural patterns of perpetrators and victims. Contact phone: 01702 302 333

Women's Aid – Harlow and Broxbourne

Variety of accommodation including bed-sit, private bedrooms with communal living areas and kitchen and a flat share system. Residents have access to support workers, solicitors, counsellors, training schemes and workshops. There is also support and secure play areas for children.

Women's Aid – Chelmsford

Similar facilities to above. A full time qualified child worker is available and all children are offered sessions in the children's room. Where applicable she will assist in getting children into school. A member of staff is on call for emergencies after 5pm and for 24 hour service on 01245 493 114.

Hertfordshire

Welwyn Hatfield Women's Refuge

Provides refuge accommodation to women and their children. The refuge operates a help line and provides an outreach service for women in the district who are victims of domestic violence. There are two drop in centres where qualified counsellors are available for one-to one counselling.

Woodhall Community Centre, Welwyn Garden City, Wednesday 9.30am-11.30am

William Cecil Memorial Hall, Hatfield, Thursday 9.30am-11.30am

Sanctuary House

Managed by Dacorum Women's Aid this six bedroomed detached refuge is mainly run by volunteers. They provide a number of group activities to help build positive experiences for the families, such as reflexology, yoga, children's activities, street dancing etc. They offer support, advice, and one to one counselling sessions for both the women

and children. They also offer a ten week empowerment course. Contact: info.dwa@virgin.net

Norfolk

Olive Tree Project

The Olive Tree project run a number of services for victims of domestic violence. This includes an emergency safe house with fully self contained accommodation with security features. Residents can stay in the property 24/7 if they require. Residents have access to a variety of support and advice services with the aim of developing and maintaining independence.

The Harbour Project

The harbour Project supplies individual rooms with shared facilities for women escaping domestic violence. Residents have access to a variety of support and advice services with the aim of developing and maintaining independence.

Leeway Women's Aid

Leeway has over 30 years experience of providing support to women and children affected by domestic violence. They currently provide services across the Eastern half of Norfolk. Around 200 women and children use the service at any one time.

Leeway has a refuge in Norwich and is opening a second refuge next month (June 07) in Great Yarmouth. The Norwich refuge provides emergency accommodation for up to nine families and the Great Yarmouth refuge will provide for up to 12 families. This includes support for single women and women with no recourse to public funds. Residents are provided with regular individual key-worker meetings. Support is flexible and may include help with benefits, housing, dealing with the police, courts etc. They aim to empower women to make their own decisions and take control of their lives; some women will live at the refuge for several months until they can be re-housed, whilst others may only use the refuge as a temporary space in which to think before returning home – in all cases staff will support with safety planning and sign-posting/referral to additional agencies as appropriate.

Leeway's outreach service offers support and safety planning to women still living with domestic violence and will help those women who wish to leave to do so safely. Outreach workers will also maintain their support to those that escape the abuse, allowing for continuity in the provision of practical guidance and encouragement. As within the refuge service, outreach and resettlement support is tailored to the needs of the woman and may include help with benefits, housing, dealing with courts and the police etc.

Leeway offers a range of group and individual support services for children

affected by domestic violence. These are offered to children and young people living in refuges as well as those in the community, through schools, referrals from health visitors etc. Much of the work with children and young people looks at how they are affected by their experiences and assists with learning to cope in a positive way, as well as looking at building positive relationships.

Suffolk

Ipswich Women's Aid

IWA provides 61 bed spaces / 23 bedrooms for women and their children escaping domestic violence. All frontline staff are based in one of their two refuges, with 4 advice staff offering help with benefits, housing and solicitors and 3 children's staff offering therapeutic and stimulating play and outings. A team of 9 On Call staff provide 24 hour cover and 3 resettlement staff assist residents moving out into new tenancies.

IWA also runs an external 12 week 'Freedom Programme' course 3 times a year for women who have previously or are currently experiencing domestic violence. The aim is for women to:

- 1 rebuild self confidence
- 1 know they are not to blame for the abuse
- 1 be able to spot the tactics of dominant men and avoid new abusive relationships
- 1 realise they are not alone and gain mutual support

They have recently opened a Drop-In Centre in the town and a local solicitor is running monthly Legal Advice Surgeries and we are piloting Art and Indian Head Massage courses for residents and ex-residents that are hugely successful.

International and National Projects

Research has shown that the most dangerous time of all for domestic violence victims is after they leave. The San Diego Family Justice Center is a radical and innovative project housed on four floors of a spacious downtown office block that gives domestic violence victims immediate access to professionals from every service they might possibly need under one roof: from more than 30 police officers, teams of prosecutors and family civil lawyers to housing officials, doctors, nurses and psychotherapists. There is also a well-equipped creche with qualified staff to keep children occupied while their mothers see staff elsewhere, and a cafe supplied with free food by a well known coffee vendor. For the first time, women - and the small minority of men - who want to leave an abusive relationship can access legal protection and diverse kinds of support almost instantaneously, from organisations now housed no more than a floor or two apart, and which are able to share information with ease. Previously in San Diego, as remains the case in most of Britain, victims who needed help would often have little idea of what might be available; they would traipse from office to office and wait for appointments, a process that could easily take weeks. Co-ordination and information sharing between different official bodies was at best sluggish and ineffective. If victims also had young children, the task often seemed impossibly daunting.

Clients of Britain's only Family Justice Centre, which opened in Croydon, south London in December 2005, say it has transformed their lives. The evidence suggests that the Croydon centre has also reduced repeated domestic violence, as well as providing other support. But financially dependent on the local council, two charities and the Metropolitan Police, it gets nothing from central government and cannot yet operate at its planned capacity. Its greatest problem is not threats from abusers, but a shortage of cash.

Of course, there are differences between Britain and America, not least in the legal system, where prosecutors here maintain a greater distance from victims. Other than that, the biggest contrast between San Diego and Britain's only Family Justice

Centre, in Croydon, is money. Each year, on top of the essential employment costs, San Diego's budget is \$600,000 for staff and \$1.2m for building overheads. Croydon's, at £246,000, is not much more than a quarter of that - a figure reflected in its much less spacious accommodation. (San Diego sees about 10,000 families each year, Croydon some 7,000.) But the guiding principles and the staff's commitment are identical.

As in San Diego, each new case at Croydon begins with a risk assessment by a trained advocate. Within the building can be found officials from the council social services and children's departments; family law solicitors from six local firms who attend on a weekly rota; the Samaritans, debt, drug and alcohol, immigration and relationship counsellors; the Probation Service; Women's Aid, the local refuge provider; and the 32 officers of the Croydon borough Metropolitan Police Community Safety Unit, most of them detectives. A forensic medical room, where an examiner will be able to treat, photograph and document injuries, is set to open shortly - when funds become available.

The Family Justice Centre, 69 Park Lane, Croydon, Surrey CR0 1JD (020 8688 0100)

(Edited from Observer Magazine article - May 2007)

Freedom Programme

A free 12 week rolling programme to help women understand the beliefs held by abusive men, to illustrate the effects on children, to assist women in identifying potential future abusers, to help women gain self esteem and confidence and to introduce women to community resources such as Women's Aid and the Police.

They also run various 'awareness raising' programmes for men at various UK locations. They are open to men who want to improve their relationship skills or find out further information about domestic violence.

Contact: 01547 520228

The Broken Rainbow LGBT Domestic Violence Service

A support service for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people experiencing domestic violence. Funded by the Home Office. They operate a UK wide helpline on 08452 605560



Space East, operating across the East of England, is made up of more than sixty member organisations, the majority being registered charities. Most provide accommodation for single homeless people, people recovering from mental illness, women needing emergency accommodation, ex-offenders, people abusing drugs and alcohol and young people leaving care. Some provide temporary or emergency accommodation while others provide long-term supported housing. Others provide services such as housing aid, resettlement, day centre facilities or practical help for vulnerable people needing support.

The benefits of Space East membership...

Associate with a close-knit supported housing & social care sector across the region

Benchmark your services and experiences with peer not-for-profit organisations and affiliates advocating for the role of non-statutory supported housing and homelessness services across the East of England.

Influence local, regional & national government

Join a 'regional assembly' of not-for-profit supported housing and homelessness interests and lobby Government and other policy makers on behalf of its members. Currently, Space East has a place on the Regional Housing Delivery Group, Supporting People Eastern Region Group, the Regional Homelessness Forum Executive and has association with a range of sub-regional decision making bodies and forums.

Increased services development opportunities

Get involved in specialist forums, share knowledge and experience with other organisations and increase the potential for partnership development opportunities.

Obtain valuable information

Our email briefings and publications offer news from the supported housing sector in the region, policy updates and information on key contacts at local, regional and national levels.

Access tailored support

We provide structured support in assessing and developing your services and your organisation - as well as access to workforce development opportunities.

Make savings

Receive member discounts on events, publications and other products and services. Also take advantage of our priority booking system for members.

Promote your organisation and services

Advertise and make links to your organisation's website by appearing on our list of existing members on the Space East website.

Shape our services and activities

Exercise your voting rights at our Annual General Meeting and through the 'regional assembly'. As the only supported housing and homelessness umbrella organisation in the region influence the work we do and the direction our services take.

Domestic Violence Helplines:

Broken Rainbow Helpline: 08452 604460
 Cambridgeshire Domestic Violence Advocacy Service: 01223 823354
 Huntingdonshire District Council Housing Advice: 01480 388218
 Leeway Helpline: 0845 241 2171
 Luton Women's Aid Help Line: 01582 391856
 Men's Advise Line: 0808 801 0327
 National Child Protection Helpline (NSPCC): 0800 800500
 National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247
 Samaritans: 0845 909090
 Suffolk Domestic Violence and Abuse Helpline: 0800 783 5121
 Thurrock Women's Refuge Association: 01375 391508
 Women's Aid 24 hour crisis-line: 01279836611

Valuable Resources for Frontline workers:

Department of Health

'Domestic violence: A resource manual for health care professionals'
 Download from www.dh.gov.uk

Domestic Violence, Crimes, and Victims Act 2004
<http://www.opsi.gov.uk>

Directory of services in Cambridgeshire: www.scamb.gov.uk

CAADA

Co-ordinated Action against Domestic Abuse offer accredited training for IDVAs, and direct support to managers of IDVA services. They also provide training support for MARACs in the New Specialist Domestic Violence Court areas, plus other online resources, training and support.

<http://www.caada.org.uk>

Why women?

This campaign provides a voice for women's organisations, which do great work for women but are under threat because of lack of funding. As of March 7th 2007 over 250 women's organisations and over 600 individuals have signed up to the campaign.

<http://www.whyywomen.org.uk>

www.space-east.org