Addressing Domestic Violence and Abuse in Buckinghamshire

Task and Finish Group Report

Chairman: Lesley Clarke
Published: March 2012
6,044 incidents of domestic violence and abuse were reported to the police in Buckinghamshire in 2010/11.

The Home Office estimates that the extent of domestic violence and abuse in this county is almost three times higher than this figure.*

Domestic violence and abuse affects people of all backgrounds, regardless of their…

...gender

...income

...ethnic background

....faith

...disability

...age

...sexuality

If you, or someone you know is affected by domestic violence and abuse, call the 24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline on 0808 2000 247. In an emergency, always call the police on 999.

*See page 6
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Executive Summary

Domestic violence and abuse damage lives. It affects people regardless of their background, and it is a much hidden problem, with figures suggesting that it is vastly under-reported. This means that the majority of victims do not receive, or are not aware of, support services and many continue to live in violent and abusive relationships.

Addressing domestic violence and abuse is one of the priorities of the Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership, and based on the evidence we have gathered during this review we consider it vital that domestic violence and abuse is addressed in partnership, and that it is a priority for all agencies. In particular, we are of the view that domestic violence and abuse must become a top priority of the Police and Crime Commissioner who will be elected in November 2012.

This review was timed to feed into the development of the 2012-2015 countywide Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy. We gathered a wide range of evidence, and our recommendations reflect our view that there is much more that should be done to address domestic violence and abuse. We want to see more joined up commissioning of services and improved work with partner agencies, particularly GPs who potentially have a key role in ensuring those affected are supported. We think more should be done to raise awareness about the issue of domestic violence and abuse, and that education on healthy relationships is essential to prevent young people being affected in the future. It is also vital that those affected by domestic violence and abuse now are able to access services easily, and that there is maximum support for those who reach crisis point.

The report and recommendations that follow address these points, and consider the issues of commissioned services (section 5.i), multi-agency working (section 5.ii), awareness raising (section 5.iii), access to services (section 5.iv), healthy relationships education (section 5.v), school admissions for families in refuge (section 5.vi), and housing support for those living with domestic violence and abuse (5.vii).
Recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the County Council must continue to seek and make the most of opportunities to highlight the issue of domestic violence and abuse, to try to ensure that it remains a priority for the Thames Valley under the new Police and Crime Commissioner.

Recommendation 2: That commissioning for domestic violence and abuse services must be joined up across the County Council. Equality Impact Assessments should be carried out for each commissioning decision to ensure a holistic approach is taken that considers the impact of decisions on different groups, and specifically on victims, children and perpetrators.

Recommendation 3: That decisions about changes to funding of commissioned domestic violence and abuse services should be agreed by all relevant Cabinet Members, not just the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the budget. This will ensure that there is an understanding of the impact of any changes for all services and groups affected.

Recommendation 4: That the 2012-2015 Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy includes an action to develop effective work with GPs on the issue of DVA, through appropriate structures such as the Health and Wellbeing Board and the PCT’s Clinical Commissioning Board. Aims of the work should be to raise GPs’ understanding of DVA and the support services that are available for those affected.

Recommendation 5: The Domestic Violence Publicity Group should seek support from the corporate Communications team to develop a thorough communications and engagement plan to include targeting of schools, GP surgeries, Sure Start Children’s Centres and libraries, and the use of social media. The plan should also include work to engage councillors and officers at all levels of local government so that they can raise awareness of domestic violence and abuse through their networks.

Recommendation 6: That the 2012-2015 Domestic Violence and Abuse strategy includes an action to establish mechanisms to consult DVA service users in order to identify steps that will make support services more accessible to those affected by DVA. This should particularly focus on working with groups who are known to be under-represented in accessing services.

Recommendation 7: That the 2012-2015 Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy includes an action to develop and implement a flexible plan for engaging with schools about DVA in the changing climate of school governance. The plan should aim to facilitate relevant voluntary organisations being able to work in schools in the county to carry out preventative education around DVA, investigate opportunities for using educational theatre and youth conferences, and should include appropriate targeted work for children and young people of minority backgrounds.

Recommendation 8: That in advance of taking the decision on whether the local authority will continue to coordinate school admissions under the new Admissions Code which comes into force in September 2013, the County Council’s School Admissions Team should consult with both Aylesbury and Wycombe Women’s Aids and take into account the school admissions needs of families living in refuge accommodation.
**Recommendation 9:** That if the decision is taken that the local authority continues to coordinate school admissions beyond September 2013, a target is set that school places for children in refuge accommodation should be found within one week of their application.

**Recommendation 10:** That the 2012-2015 Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy includes an action to engage with Registered Providers (housing associations) to ensure they have fit for purpose Domestic Violence and Abuse Policies, which require them to respond pro-actively to cases of DVA occurring in their properties, to support victims and take appropriate action towards perpetrators. This work should include further research into best practice in this area, which should become the standard for all Registered Providers (housing associations) across Buckinghamshire.

**Recommendation 11:**
That updates on progress against the recommendations in this report should be made to the Overview and Scrutiny Commissioning Committee in 6 and 12 months time.
1. **Introduction**

1. Domestic violence and abuse is a cross-cutting problem, and a wide range of organisations work in partnership in Buckinghamshire to provide services for those affected. Within the Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnerships, the County Council has a coordinating role and will oversee the new countywide Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy that will be in place from 2012-2015.

2. We chose to focus our review on areas that can be addressed under the new Strategy, so our recommendations focus on areas that the County Council can address directly and those that can best be worked on in partnership through the Community and Domestic Violence Strategy Group.

3. During our programme of evidence we looked at how domestic violence and abuse (DVA) services are provided through joint working in the County Council and between partner agencies. We considered how DVA affects families from all backgrounds and looked at a wide range of services that are available for them. We explored the need to raise awareness of DVA, and the importance of educating children and young people about healthy relationships. There were many more areas that we touched on but did not have the time to look at in detail. These include detail about prosecutions and the need for victims to be supported as DVA cases are progressed to court, services that work with perpetrators, and the detail about how DVA can be addressed for groups with particular circumstances or backgrounds, such as those with no recourse to public funds, or where DVA is perpetrated by a member of the family other than a partner (such as, by young people against their parents, or by someone who is a carer for a member of their family). We have been reassured that the new Strategy will set out actions under all these important areas.

4. Our Task and Finish Group, commissioned by the Overview and Scrutiny Commissioning Committee, comprised the following members: Lesley Clarke (Chairman), Margaret Aston (Vice Chairman), Doug Anson, Noel Brown, Peter Hudson (co-optee from Chiltern District Council), Tom Hunter Watts (co-optee from Aylesbury Vale District Council), Arif Hussain (co-optee from Wycombe District Council), Ruth Vigor Hedderly (for Buckinghamshire County Council and South Bucks District Council), Julia Wassell.

5. We gathered our evidence over a series of meetings and visits, carried out between November 2011 and February 2012. We are grateful to the officers from the Community Safety Team at the County Council who worked closely with us to help us design an effective programme of evidence gathering. We also extend our thanks to all those officers at the County Council who attended formal and informal meetings and provided written evidence. We are very grateful to our partners who provided written evidence: Bucks Healthcare Trust, both Aylesbury and Wycombe Women’s Aids, and each of the District Councils and registered providers on the matter of housing. Thanks also go to those County, District and Parish Councillors and Clerks who completed our online survey, and to BALC for helping us to publicise it.

6. We would particularly like to thank the external guests who attended our meetings: DI Chris Inness of Thames Valley Police, the Asian Women’s Worker from
Wycombe Women’s Aid, Tracy Woodrow from Aylesbury Women’s Aid and Denise from Wycombe Women’s Aid, and Michael Veryard, Principal Housing Officer, from Chiltern District Council.

7. We would also like to extend thanks to the Aylesbury MARAC for allowing two of our members to observe a meeting, and to all the partner agencies who contributed to the Strategy Day organised by the Community Safety Team, which we attended in January, who talked so honestly about their challenges and priorities for addressing DVA in the county.

8. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we want to extend our grateful thanks to the women we spoke to at Aylesbury and Wycombe Women’s Aids who were so open in talking to us about their own personal experiences of domestic violence and abuse. It was invaluable for us to hear first-hand how domestic violence affects people’s lives, and vitally, to hear about the transformational effect that the right support services can have for victims and their children. The women showed great strength in talking to us, and we wish them all the very best for the future.

2. Context

2. i) About Domestic Violence and Abuse

9. Domestic violence and abuse is defined by the Home Office 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.”\(^1\) DVA is typically characterised by power and control, which are exerted by the perpetrator towards the victim, and commonly leave the victim feeling vulnerable, isolated, and unable to change their situation.

10. Domestic violence and abuse is a serious problem, which affects both men and women. From the 2010/11 British Crime Survey it is known that every year one million women experience at least one incident of DVA.\(^2\) However, it is also a hugely hidden and under-reported problem. In Buckinghamshire, 6,044 incidents were reported to the Police in 2010/11.\(^3\) By contrast a ‘ready reckoner’ tool from the Home Office, which estimates levels of violence against women and girls aged 16 – 59 within a population, suggests that in Buckinghamshire 16,504 females in that age bracket would have been the victim of DVA in the past year. This figure is almost three times the number of incidents reported to the Police, and given that it does not include other age brackets or male victims, the true extent of domestic violence and abuse in Buckinghamshire can considered to be significantly higher.\(^4\)

\(^1\) As our review was underway the Homes Office consulted on widening the definition to include ‘coercive control’ and victims under 18 years old. The published consultation end date was 30 March 2012.

\(^2\) Presentation by Senior Domestic Violence Coordinator, BCC, at 21 November 2011 meeting of Domestic Violence Task and Finish Group

\(^3\) This is an increase from 5,814 in 2009/10 and 4,932 in 2008/09. The increase was achieved under an LAA target to increase reporting.

\(^4\) Presentation by Senior Domestic Violence Coordinator, BCC, at 21 November 2011 meeting of Domestic Violence Task and Finish Group
11. Research has repeatedly concluded that gender is a significant risk factor for DVA, with women more likely to experience severe and/or repeated incidents of violence and abuse. However, men do experience domestic violence, and there are a number of different statistics cited about the proportion of DVA that affects male victims. The British Crime Survey, as one example, reports that men were the victims in 23% of DVA incidents in 2010/11.

12. Just as DVA affects people regardless of their gender, so too it can affect people whatever their background. It was not feasible for our review to examine every particular way that DVA can affect different groups. However we were mindful throughout our evidence gathering that there is not a homogenous group of people affected by DVA, and that particular additional issues may be faced by people according to their gender, ethnic background or faith, age, sexuality or disability, or other factors such as their income level or whether drug or alcohol misuse is involved. Regardless of these characteristics, we feel strongly that domestic violence and abuse is unacceptable wherever it occurs in society, and that it is essential for all those affected to be supported, whatever their individual circumstances.

2. ii) The impacts of Domestic Violence and Abuse

13. Domestic violence and abuse can have devastating consequences for those it affects. As our review focused on victims and their children, this section summarises the impacts of DVA on these groups and only briefly covers perpetrators.

14. Every case of DVA is different and many are very complex, but there are a number of common emotional and practical impacts experienced by victims. Power and control are central to DVA, and it is the combination of behaviours exhibited by the perpetrator that can be so intimidating for victims. Research has found that on average, a victim of DVA will experience 35 incidents before making a report to the Police.

15. There are many reasons why victims may choose not to seek help, or why they choose not to leave an abusive relationship even if they do seek help. Perpetrators may directly threaten or bribe victims not to leave, they may control access to money needed to escape, and they are likely to have isolated the victim from their support networks of family and friends. The impacts of the abuse on the victim’s confidence can also mean they do not feel able to seek help, and indeed many victims believe the abuse could be a ‘bad patch’ in what they believe is a loving, committed relationship. There are also practical considerations for any victim considering leaving an abusive relationship, such as whether they know where to find help, how and to where they would escape, the impacts that leaving would have for any children, and the implications of giving up their home and potentially moving to a new area where they know no one. With all these factors at play, cases of domestic violence can be hugely complex and, as we heard from the women we

https://www.refuge.org.uk/
spoke to in refuge accommodation, it may take a crisis of particular severity for a victim to seek help. The complexity of cases, and the crisis that is often the catalyst for a victim being in contact with support services, mean it is essential that professionals work with victims sensitively to support them to make their own choices about their future.

16. Children who live with domestic violence are at increased risk of behavioural problems and emotional trauma, and mental health difficulties in adult life. Not all children who live with DVA will exhibit problems or difficulties either immediately or later in life, but all will be affected in some way. It is common for children witnessing or experiencing abuse to feel shame and embarrassment which prevents them from telling anyone, and the impact of DVA on the non-abusing parent can mean that their attachment with their children is affected, leading to developmental problems for children, particularly where this occurs in the first few years of life. We were shocked to hear about research indicating that brain scans of young children who have witnessed abuse show significantly restricted development compared to those who have not witnessed abuse.

17. The effects of DVA on children may be seen through school or social problems and, because children learn about relationships from those they see around them, some children who witness abuse grow up believing that violence and control are normal. One of the women we spoke to who had experienced domestic violence and was now using Wycombe Women's Aid services told us:

“I was brought up in an abusive home, I felt it was right to live like that…My son is exactly like his father, even though we left his father when he was three years old…And now my grandchildren at 5 or 6 years old allow other children to bully them because it’s what they’ve learned at home.”

18. This pattern of abuse being repeated through generations was something we heard about repeatedly during the review, and underpins why domestic violence services are so essential. If we are to tackle DVA, not only must services be provided help to those currently affected, it is also vital that preventative work takes place so that all children and young people learn the importance of healthy relationships. These parallel themes guided our review, and are reflected throughout the key findings and recommendations that follow in section 3.

19. During our review we did not look in detail at work around perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse. However, we are aware that many perpetrators repeat their abusive behaviour in new relationships, because all too often they are not brought to justice and worked with to change their patterns of behaviour. We recognise the damage that domestic violence and abuse can cause for victims, and particularly the difficulties that surround a victim’s involvement in criminal proceedings against perpetrators. As such, we are of the clear view that the work that is underway in the county to increase so-called 'victimless prosecutions' is of great importance, as it

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8 Kolbo et al, 1996; Morley and Mullender, 1994; Hester et al, 2000
9 Minutes, 21 November 2011, Domestic Violence Task and Finish Group
offers a way for perpetrators to be held to account for their actions without further involvement from victims.10

2. iii) The strategic context of our review

20. It is important to note that our review took place alongside a number of other relevant pieces of work. We were keen to avoid duplication, so we did not look at any of these areas in detail, but we are of the view that our review should be considered within the wider context, and with an awareness of the following.

21. The County Council is currently carrying out the Munro Programme, which is reviewing the children’s safeguarding system in order to deliver better outcomes within the available resources. Over 75% of the cases that are referred to children’s social care have domestic violence as a contributing factor, and every case of DVA reported to the Police is automatically referred to social care. One of the workstrands of the Munro Programme is to manage the large volumes of referrals to social care through a single ‘front door’ as part of a whole systems approach, and we welcome the commitment to work closely with the Police and other partners to achieve this. This approach will deliver better journeys through the system and better long term outcomes for children.

22. At the time of our review, an independent audit had been commissioned by the Bucks Safeguarding Children Board to assess how different agencies respond and refer cases when children are living in households affected by domestic abuse. The audit has a focus around early intervention as well as looking at cases where children already have Child Protection Plans in place. The purpose of the audit is to identify areas of existing good practice and areas for process improvements, and to provide a baseline for future audits to be compared against.

23. The County Council and partners are developing ‘Families First’, a programme of work which responds to national policy around families with multiple problems and incorporates Buckinghamshire’s drive to delivering better outcomes for such families through a ‘Community Budget’ approach. These multiple problems may include worklessness, children not attending school, and the involvement of family members in crime and/or anti-social behaviour. Locally, domestic violence has been identified by partners as one of the characteristics which may affect families in crisis, and this is likely to be reflected in the content of the Families First agenda moving forward.

24. From November 2012, the Thames Valley will have an elected Police and Crime Commissioner who will be responsible for holding the Police to account for how crime is tackled across the force area. The Commissioner will direct Home Office funding for community safety that has previously been given directly to local authorities, and we are concerned that this change should not adversely affect the level of domestic violence services provided in our county. We very much welcome the work that is underway across the Thames Valley to present the joint priorities of all the local Community Safety Partnerships to candidates for the Commissioner role, and we are heartened that Domestic Violence and Abuse has been identified as one of the top community safety priorities across the force area. We hope that

10 Minutes, 7 December 2011, Domestic Violence Task and Finish Group
this report will be seen further evidence that DVA should continue to be a priority for the Thames Valley under the new Commissioner.

**Recommendation 1:**
That the County Council must continue to seek and make the most of opportunities to highlight the issue of domestic violence and abuse, to try to ensure that it remains a priority for the Thames Valley under the new Police and Crime Commissioner.

25. With this strategic context in mind, and the wider context to the issue of domestic violence and abuse above, the section that follows will set out in detail the key findings of our review and our recommendations.

**3. Key findings**

**3. i) Services commissioned by the County Council**

26. The domestic violence and abuse services that are available in the county are wide-ranging, and provision is targeted to victims, affected children and perpetrators. We were impressed by the range of support services that are available, funded in partnership from a variety of sources, which include refuge and outreach services, Freedom Programme courses that empower victims and increase their confidence, the Fresh Start programme which works with perpetrators, and child therapy groups among others.11

27. We were very disappointed to learn that funding from Central Government for DVA services is reducing drastically over the next few years. The Community Safety Grant within the Area Based Grant that is deployed across the District Community Safety Partnerships suffered an in-year cut in 2011/12, and has reduced by 50% for 2012/13. Thereafter the funding will go to the Police and Crime Commissioner, who will direct how it is spent across the Thames Valley as a whole.12 This situation means that not only is Buckinghamshire already facing known cuts, but that potentially even greater cuts could affect the county into the future. We are strongly of the view that funding for domestic violence and abuse services in Buckinghamshire should be protected. We urge the County Council’s Cabinet to take forward the commitment they showed to DVA services in the 2012/13 Budget, and continue to increase the County Council’s own funding for DVA services wherever necessary in the future.

28. The commissioning landscape is complex, and the County Council part-funds some provision while wholly funding other services. Within the County Council, we learnt that services are commissioned across a number of service areas, including Community Safety in Localities and Safer Communities, Children and Young People, and Supporting People within Adults and Family Wellbeing. While these commissioned services may complement one another, there is not a shared approach to commissioning that ensures each decision is taken with a holistic view of all available services. Nor are contracts and performance measurement aligned,

11 More detail at [https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/community/community-safety/domestic-abuse-resources-for-professionals/](https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/community/community-safety/domestic-abuse-resources-for-professionals/)

meaning that each service area manages the administration of its commissioning in isolation.

29. We heard from officers that if commissioning decisions were more joined up across the County Council then expertise could be pooled from each service area to ensure that the impacts of decisions are understood for victims, children and perpetrators. This pooling of expertise would also prevent duplication and mitigate the risk of silo working. We are of the view that carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for commissioning decisions would provide a framework for assessing the impacts of decisions, and give a sound basis to a joint commissioning approach.

30. To ensure that the decisions taken in a joined-up commissioning model are successfully implemented, we are of the view that decisions around funding for DVA services should also be aligned. This would mean that a funding decision about a commissioned service could not be taken in isolation, but that it would have to be considered more widely with a view to the impacts in related portfolio areas.

**Recommendation 2:**
That commissioning for domestic violence and abuse services must be joined up across the County Council. Equality Impact Assessments should be carried out for each commissioning decision to ensure a holistic approach is taken that considers the impact of decisions on different groups, and specifically on victims, children and perpetrators.

31. As outlined in section 2, domestic violence and abuse cases can be hugely complex, with many factors at play affecting whether a victim will choose to disclose abuse and seek help. Added to this the range of agencies that may have an involvement in offering support and dealing with cases, from health services, the police and social care, to specialist agencies like Women’s Aid, and it is evident that it is vital for different agencies to work well together to offer an appropriate response to DVA.

32. As part of our evidence gathering two Members of the Task and Finish Group observed a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). MARACs are held in the north and south of the county each month. They are meetings attended by representatives of a wide range of agencies to look at individual domestic violence cases where it has been identified that there is a high risk of serious harm or death for the victim. The agencies share information and offer actions to reduce the risk faced by the victim and any children. The working assumption of the
MARAC is that no single agency can see the complete picture of the life of a victim, but all may have insights that are crucial to their safety. We were hugely impressed by the approach taken by all the professionals at the MARAC. The meeting was entirely collaborative and all participants were pro-active in volunteering actions.

33. Each victim whose case goes to a MARAC is supported by an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA). The IDVA is a professional whose role is to represent the views of the victim and whose specialist knowledge enables them to provide expert short-term support and help while the victim is in the crisis period. We were very pleased that while our review was underway the County Council’s Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group recommended that additional funding be allocated for IDVA services in the county, and that the County Council’s Cabinet has agreed funding to increase the number of IDVAs working in the county from two to four.

34. While we heard several positive accounts of multi-agency working during our evidence gathering, we were also told that this is not the experience of many victims of DVA. This is particularly true where different agencies have different guiding priorities, which often seemed to lead to victims feeling that they were not in control of their own situation. From the women we spoke to living in refuge accommodation and using Women’s Aid outreach services, we heard that bad first experiences with the police or social care had put many of them off seeking further help from statutory agencies.

35. For instance, we heard from one woman (who had not been living in Buckinghamshire at the time) that after making a report to the police her case had been automatically referred to social services, who had sent her a letter that she interpreted as threatening to take her children away if she personally did not stop the abusive situation. While she later recognises the need for child protection to be the primary concern of social care, she explained that the tone of the letter had only served to make her experience as a victim much worse, since the thing she was most scared of was losing her children. Another woman we spoke to (who also was not living in Buckinghamshire at the time) told us that the police appeared to be “fed up” of repeatedly being called to her house by her neighbours, and that she felt that she was being seen to be just as responsible for the abuse as her violent partner, against whom no action was taken. A third woman’s experience of the police (again, not in Buckinghamshire) was that they had tried to be helpful by calling to warn her that they were releasing her partner after he had been arrested. However, as he would inevitably return to their shared house, the woman felt that her partner should have been held for a longer period of time to allow him to ‘cool off’ before being released to return home. Each case we heard was anecdotal, and we are very clear that these examples are not representative of all cases. However, there are clearly lessons to be learnt about the need for all agencies to recognise the fundamental need to empower victims of abuse and consider how the actions of professionals will impact on the victim of the abuse.

36. Throughout our evidence gathering we also heard anecdotal examples of the different approaches that individual professionals take when they encounter cases of domestic violence and abuse. We heard both good and bad stories, and the message that was clear was that it is vital that training about domestic violence for relevant professionals, such as those working in the police, health services and
social care, must be thorough and ongoing. It is especially important that training is not seen as a ‘one-off, tick-box exercise’, but rather a continual rolling programme is needed to ensure that staff turnover does not impact on the consistency of professional responses.

37. We are aware that some services have more robust and consistent procedures around domestic violence than others. We were impressed by the degree to which the Confidential Routine Enquiry (CRE) is embedded in the work of health visitors and midwives, meaning that new mothers are repeatedly given the opportunity to disclose if they are experiencing abuse. It is important that the CRE is always carried out in appropriate circumstances so women feel safe to disclose, so ongoing training of these professionals is essential to ensure they have a thorough understanding of the sensitive nature of domestic abuse.

38. In contrast to the consistent processes in place for health visitors and midwives to encourage disclosure and sign-post to specialist support, we heard that there is less consistency amongst GPs. While some GPs may be sympathetic, a number of the women who had experienced abuse told us that they felt their GP didn’t want to ‘open a can of worms’ by asking questions that might encourage disclosure. One of the women living in refuge accommodation had been offered anti-depressants when she tried to discuss the abuse she was experiencing, and the women questioned whether GPs are confident in how they can best offer support to someone experiencing DVA.

39. We are of the view that GPs are a key group who have a role in ensuring that people experiencing DVA are helped to get appropriate support. We know from national research that victims of DVA living in rural areas are more likely to disclose to health professionals so given the rural nature of much of Buckinghamshire, improving how our GPs approach DVA should be a priority. We were also told by several of the women we spoke to who had experienced abuse that they would have felt safe to talk about their situation with a health professional, but only one whom they were confident had a good understanding of the issues of DVA and appropriate support.

**Recommendation 4:**
That the 2012-2015 Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy includes an action to develop effective work with GPs on the issue of DVA, through appropriate structures such as the Health and Wellbeing Board and the PCT’s Clinical Commissioning Board. Aims of the work should be to raise GPs’ understanding of DVA and the support services that are available for those affected.

3. iii) Awareness raising

40. Throughout our evidence gathering it became very clear that raising awareness about domestic violence and abuse is key to helping those already affected and tackling the occurrence of abuse in the long term. Increasing understanding of what constitutes abuse is essential if people are to recognise abuse affecting either themselves or others, whatever their social background. It is also vital...
individuals are aware that support is available, and that they know how to access it or to help others access it.

41. We spoke to several women who had experienced domestic abuse, and all of them felt there was a need for society to have a greater awareness of DVA in order that it becomes an issue that can be talked about openly and that is widely recognised as unacceptable. Changing public attitudes in this way, the women explained, would not only reduce perpetrators’ confidence in exerting power and control but would also reduce the feelings of shame, embarrassment and isolation felt by so many victims.

42. We were impressed to hear of the achievements of the county’s Domestic Violence Publicity Group, including the extent of local and regional press coverage generated around key events such as White Ribbon Day, the international day against violence against women. There are inevitably resource constraints on the amount of publicity work that can be carried out, meaning that work to raise awareness of domestic violence and abuse must be well planned and appropriately targeted to have maximum impact. There are no longer resources available to fund blanket marketing campaigns, so it is essential that the county’s publicity work makes use of avenues that are low cost but potentially wide reaching. The women we spoke to who had experienced domestic abuse told us that health services and GP surgeries in particular would be key places where they might have picked up information about accessing help.

43. As part of our evidence gathering we conducted a short online survey with County, District and Parish Councillors and Clerks to ascertain the degree to which they are aware of the level of domestic violence and abuse in the county. It was notable that about three quarters of the respondents felt that they had not very much, or no, understanding of the level of domestic violence in the county as a whole or in the community that they represent. However, around two thirds of the respondents felt that there is a role for councillors in offering support and signposting for those affected by domestic violence, and comments highlighted their views that more awareness raising is needed, both for themselves as community leaders, but also for the wider public.13

“I know about domestic violence from the media. Personally I have never witnessed or been made aware of any, and would therefore like to learn a lot about it and be trained on how to provide advice if approached by any person in my community.”

“Regarding the role of local councillors in helping people suffering from domestic abuse – I believe they have the same responsibility as everyone else in society.”

44. We are of the view that raising awareness face to face can have a great impact. We very much welcome the commitment from the Cabinet Member for Community Safety that presentations on domestic violence and abuse will be offered to every Local Area Forum (or equivalent) in the county. Those of us who have already had a presentation at our LAF have noted that many attendees have found the

13 Papers for 6 February 2012 meeting of Domestic Violence Task and Finish Group
presentations both eye-opening and engaging. Indeed, the level of understanding of DVA cited by the small number of the questionnaire respondents who had received a presentation was considerably higher than the average overall.  

We are keen that this type of opportunity to engage community leaders and others with wide networks is maximised, in order to influence key people who can help to increase the wider public’s awareness of domestic violence and abuse.

Recommendation 5:
The Domestic Violence Publicity Group should seek support from the corporate Communications team to develop a thorough communications and engagement plan to include targeting of schools, GP surgeries, Sure Start Children’s Centres and libraries, and the use of social media. The plan should also include work to engage councillors and officers at all levels of local government so that they can raise awareness of domestic violence and abuse through their networks.

3. iv) Access to DVA services

45. Domestic violence and abuse are unacceptable wherever they occur within our society, and whatever form they take. During our evidence gathering we considered a research report that had been undertaken within an Asian community in the county about their access to health, education and housing services. The research was commissioned by a local housing association and was carried out in 2011. The research had found evidence of DVA and it particularly highlighted the difficulties faced by the women they had spoken to in being able to access support services, either because they were not aware that services were available, or there were other factors that prevented access, such as language or cultural barriers. We are reassured that a working group has been established to address the issues faced by the community that was the subject of this particular research, but are of the view that more needs to be done across the county to improve access to services for those experiencing DVA.  

46. We know from the domestic violence services self-assessment that was completed in late 2011 by the County Council’s Community Safety Team that there is an under-representation of people from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds accessing support services. That said there is some excellent specialist provision in place in Buckinghamshire to provide tailored DVA services to BME communities. We were hugely impressed to hear about the work of the Asian Women’s Outreach Worker at Wycombe Women’s Aid. The details of her work are highly confidential, as the women she helps often do not have support from their wider community, meaning that they must be helped in secret. We heard of covert support meetings arranged at school gates and in doctors’ surgeries, or even in a car park, in order to avoid perpetrators and other members of the community finding out that the victim was seeking help. The strength of these women to seek to change their situations in the face of very real danger cannot be underestimated, and the value of an

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14 Ibid.
15 Minutes, 18 January 2012, Domestic Violence Task and Finish Group
16 Minutes, 21 November 2011, Domestic Violence Task and Finish Group
expert support worker who speaks relevant languages and understands the particular cultural pressures at play is very great.

47. At the time we spoke with her, the Asian Women’s Worker was supporting a caseload of 40 women in just 25 hours a week. These women come from across the southern part of Buckinghamshire, and the Worker was clear that many more women from Asian and other BME communities are in need of DVA support services than are on her caseload. We were also concerned to hear that funding bids by Aylesbury Women’s Aid have been unsuccessful in securing equivalent specialist provision for Asian women in the northern part of the county.17

48. While we are in favour of increasing funding for support services for victims of DVA, including for specialist provision for victims of different backgrounds, we are very aware of the current financial climate which is placing restrictions of all types of public service provision. As such our conclusions in this area must be realistic. We consider it essential that all professionals working in existing ‘mainstream’ DVA services should be culturally aware, in order that provision can be tailored appropriately to victims’ individual circumstances. Through training and further research into the views of those affected by DVA, we are keen to see an increase in the degree to which support services are accessible to those in need of them, whatever their background.

Recommendation 6:
That the 2012-2015 Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy includes an action to establish mechanisms to consult DVA service users in order to identify steps that will make support services more accessible to those affected by DVA. This should particularly focus on working with groups who are known to be under-represented in accessing services.

3. v) Education about healthy relationships in schools

49. Preventing domestic violence and abuse in our society in the long term depends on bringing up children and young people who recognise that respect, and not control, is central to healthy relationships. Schools, both primary and secondary, can play a key part in delivering healthy relationships education, so that pupils grow up confident of forming respectful relationships, able to recognise abuse that they or others are experiencing, and empowered to act in the face of abuse. This education is valuable for all young people, to guard against them becoming either a perpetrator or a victim of domestic violence and abuse.

50. We know that there is good practice to be found within the county’s schools, and were pleased to hear of examples such as Wycombe High School, where the Asian Women’s Worker from Wycombe Women’s Aid had been invited to work with GCSE students who were looking at the topic of ‘honour based violence’ as part of their citizenship studies.18 It is difficult to know the extent of such good practice,

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17 Minutes, 18 January 2012, Domestic Violence Task and Finish Group
18 Ibid.
particularly in light of the changing climate of school governance which means the local authority has less direct involvement in the work of individual schools.

51. We recognise, however, that schools do not exist in isolation but will naturally continue to respond to the expectations of their communities. As such councillors do have a role to play in influencing the work of schools, both in their community leadership role and as many hold positions on school governing bodies (or boards in the case of academies). We therefore welcome the suggestion from the School Improvement Service that it looks into leading a workshop for members and senior officers to explore the balance of academic and social education in our schools. Such a workshop would help to articulate a vision about the role of the County Council and its political leaders in promoting education on social issues such as domestic violence and abuse.19

52. Healthy relationships education can be delivered in several ways in schools, in PHSE and other subjects such as Religious Education, Citizenship, English and Drama, through assemblies, and through media such as educational theatre. There are a number of organisations that provide resources for schools, such as the free lesson plans produced by national Women’s Aid and the resources that were produced by Wycombe Rape Crisis as part of the Healthy Schools agenda. We are keen that schools are encouraged to make best use of these types of resources, and to work with organisations which can directly deliver education on domestic violence and abuse. For instance, we are aware of the Freedom Charity, which has worked with schools in Luton, Bedford and London, to educate and empower young people in relation to the issues of ‘honour based violence’ and forced marriage.20

53. We recognise that children and young people do not only learn at school. We are keen that all appropriate opportunities for engaging with young people are taken, including work with youth groups and youth engagement mechanisms (such as Youth Cabinets) across the County Council and its partners. We also consider that social media offers a cost effective method to reach young people who might not engage through other mediums. These areas of work should be developed appropriately both in recommendation 4 (above) and recommendation 6 (below).

Recommendation 7:
That the 2012-2015 Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy includes an action to develop and implement a flexible plan for engaging with schools about DVA in the changing climate of school governance. The plan should aim to facilitate relevant voluntary organisations being able to work in schools in the county to carry out preventative education around DVA, investigate opportunities for using educational theatre and youth conferences, and should include appropriate targeted work for children and young people of minority backgrounds.

3. vi) Schools admissions for families in refuges

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19 Minutes, 26 January 2012, Domestic Violence Task and Finish Group
20 http://www.freedomcharity.org.uk/
54. We particularly valued the input of women who have experienced domestic abuse into our review. Their perspectives, and the views of the Women’s Aid workers who support them, were vital in helping us to understand the immediate concerns of women leaving abusive relationships and entering refuge accommodation.

55. It is usually the case that women go into a refuge in a new part of the country in order to escape their abusive partner. This means that children who move with their mothers are in need of a new school place when they arrive at a refuge. The majority of the women we spoke to who were living in refuge accommodation did have school aged children, and these women all spoke of their concern about how the upheaval of moving away from home would affect their children. It was very important to the women that their children should be safe and happy, and all agreed that maintaining a normal routine of going to school was essential for children to adjust and settle in their new surroundings. It therefore makes a huge difference how quickly a school place can be found for a child moving into refuge accommodation.

56. School admissions are currently coordinated by the County Council, and it may take between three and four weeks for a place to be found for a child moving into refuge. As part of our review, we spoke to the Admissions Team and were able to pass on advice to both Aylesbury and Wycombe Women’s Aids about how to work with their local schools to speed up the application process through the local authority.

57. We also learnt that the Government is introducing a new Admissions Code from September 2013 which will no longer require local authorities to coordinate school admissions. In Buckinghamshire it has not been decided whether local authority coordination will continue under the new Code, and we are of the view that if it does, improvements should be made to the speed with which school places are found for children in refuge accommodation.21

Recommendation 8:
That in advance of taking the decision on whether the local authority will continue to coordinate school admissions under the new Admissions Code which comes into force in September 2013, the County Council’s School Admissions Team should consult with both Aylesbury and Wycombe Women’s Aids and take into account the school admissions needs of families living in refuge accommodation.

Recommendation 9:
That if the decision is taken that the local authority continues to coordinate school admissions beyond September 2013, a target is set that school places for children in refuge accommodation should be found within one week of their application.

3. vii) Housing support for those living with domestic violence

21 Papers for 6 February 2012 meeting of Domestic Violence Task and Finish Group
58. An issue that we heard about repeatedly during our evidence gathering was that very often when a victim of DVA decides to leave their abusive relationship, they have no choice but to also leave their home. In many cases, it is when abuse reaches a crisis point that a victim will decide to leave, often taking children with them, in order to escape the perpetrator. At this point a victim may go into refuge accommodation, which provides a safe, secret place to live, usually in another part of the country to the perpetrator. Refuge space cannot always be found as soon as it is needed, and we heard accounts both from women who had had to stay with friends until space was available, and from those who were found refuge accommodation immediately.

59. There is a national reciprocal arrangement that victims of DVA can be placed in a refuge with available space in any area of the country. In 2010/11, the refuges in Buckinghamshire, run by Aylesbury and Wycombe Women’s Aids, provided accommodation for 125 women and 154 children in total, many of whom had moved in from outside the county. In the same year, the two Women’s Aids found refuge provision elsewhere in the country for 75 women and their children who were experiencing DVA within Buckinghamshire.22 Victims of DVA living in refuge accommodation are able to make a homelessness application with a view to finding longer term accommodation in any local authority area and this is commonly, but not always, the area where they are in refuge.

60. We heard from all the District Councils that they provide support for people experiencing domestic violence and abuse as part of work that fulfils their duty to provide advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness. This includes providing help for those affected to take appropriate practical steps to ensure their safety, by sign-posting to support services such as Women’s Aid and giving advice in relation to housing matters, whether they may go on to leave their current home or find a way to remain there safely.

61. The Sanctuary Scheme, which is provided by Mears in Buckinghamshire and funded by Supporting People through the County and District Councils, provides an alternative in some cases of DVA to enable the victim to remain in their home. By providing adaptations to increase home security, the scheme aims to help people experiencing DVA to feel safer in their homes, which can give them confidence following the end of an abusive relationship. Features such as spy-holes, additional locks or arson-proof letterboxes can help to prevent perpetrators accessing the victim at home. However measures taken under the Sanctuary Scheme should be part of an overall safety plan, since they only provide security for the victim while they are in their home. The scheme can therefore be very beneficial, but as it does not provide protection for victims when they are outside their homes, it is not appropriate in all DVA cases.23

62. Although there are clearly limitations to the Sanctuary Scheme, we were interested to explore ways in which victims of domestic violence and abuse can be supported to remain in their homes if they wish. Court orders and injunctions can be successfully used to exclude a perpetrator from the victim’s home, but we were disheartened to learn that often a perpetrator is able to remain in the home in cases

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22 Papers for 7 December meeting of Domestic Violence Task and Finish Group
23 Minutes, 19 January 2012, Domestic Violence Task and Finish Group
where the victim leaves, particularly if no criminal charges are brought. The
Housing Acts (1985 and 1988) set out that domestic violence is legal grounds for a
Council or Registered Provider (housing association) to end a tenancy and take
possession of a property. However, this applies only if the victim has left the
property and is unlikely to return, meaning it is not a suitable process for a victim
wishing to remain in their home.24

63. We consider that housing is one of the most significant practical issues affecting
victims of domestic violence and abuse. The upheaval of leaving home, especially
where children are involved, is considerable, particularly when viewed alongside
other factors likely to affect victims of DVA, such as restricted freedoms and access
to any money to facilitate escape, and the emotional effects including a lack of
confidence and, most of all, fear of the perpetrator. We were hugely impressed by
the support offered in the refuges, and are confident that all the District Councils
take their responsibilities to victims of DVA very seriously. However, we feel that
there is a need for more work to be carried out in relation to housing in the new
DVA Strategy. This should be particularly focused with the county's Registered
Providers (housing associations), which we believe are well-placed to develop and
lead best practice in supporting people affected by domestic violence and abuse
living in their properties.

Recommendation 10:
That the 2012-2015 Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy includes an action to engage
with Registered Providers (housing associations) to ensure they have fit for purpose
Domestic Violence and Abuse Policies, which require them to respond pro-actively to
cases of DVA occurring in their properties, to support victims and take appropriate action
towards perpetrators. This work should include further research into best practice in this
area, which should become the standard for all Registered Providers (housing
associations) across Buckinghamshire.

4. Conclusion

64. Domestic violence and abuse is a complex issue, and one that cannot be easily
addressed. Throughout the review, however, we were consistently impressed by
the professionals we spoke to who are committed to providing vital services to
support those affected by DVA, despite limited resources. The 2012-2015 Domestic
Violence and Abuse Strategy is an opportunity to focus work in the county on areas
of particular priority, and while we were unable to consider every aspect of DVA in
our evidence programme, this report highlights the areas we recommend for
inclusion.

65. It is paramount that those affected by domestic violence and abuse are supported,
so we believe that the County Council must continue to develop partnership
working to encourage increased disclosure from victims and provide appropriate
support for them and their children. Raising awareness among our communities is
fundamental to ensuring that domestic violence and abuse are never seen as
acceptable, and that people are empowered to speak about DVA to help to reduce

24 Minutes, 26 January 2012, Domestic Violence Task and Finish Review
the shame and isolation that keep victims hidden. We are also clear that educating our young people is essential, and that it is only through helping them to develop respectful, healthy relationships that we can ever hope to put an end to domestic violence and abuse.

**Recommendation 11:**
That updates on progress against the recommendations in this report should be made to the Overview and Scrutiny Commissioning Committee in 6 and 12 months time.
## 5. Appendices

### 5.i) Domestic Violence Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASB</td>
<td>Anti-Social Behaviour</td>
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<tr>
<td>AWA</td>
<td>Aylesbury Women’s Aid</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSCB</td>
<td>Bucks Safeguarding Children Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSVAB</td>
<td>Bucks Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAADA</td>
<td>Coordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse – national organisations supporting professionals working on Domestic Abuse</td>
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<tr>
<td>CJS</td>
<td>Criminal Justice System</td>
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<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td>Child Protection</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPS</td>
<td>Crown Prosecution Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRE</td>
<td>Confidential Routine Enquiry – made by health professionals; demonstrated to increase detection.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTG</td>
<td>Child Therapy Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>DASH</td>
<td>Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and Honour Based Violence – the name given to the risk assessment and referral used by professionals</td>
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<tr>
<td>DVA</td>
<td>Domestic Violence and Abuse</td>
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<tr>
<td>DVC</td>
<td>Domestic Violence Co-ordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>EEK</td>
<td>Early Evidence Kits – used to gather evidence from victims of sexual assault</td>
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<tr>
<td>FM</td>
<td>Forced Marriage</td>
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<tr>
<td>FP</td>
<td>Freedom Programme – for women to learn more about domestic violence and become empowered to make their own choices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBV</td>
<td>Honour Based Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDVA</td>
<td>Independent Domestic Violence Advocate – provide independent support to high risk victims of domestic violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOM</td>
<td>Integrated Offender Management – framework allowing partner agencies to work together to manage offenders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISVA</td>
<td>Independent Sexual Violence Adviser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBT</td>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgendered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAPPA</td>
<td>Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements – arrangements for responsible authorities to manage sex offenders and other offenders who pose serious risk of harm to the public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARAC</td>
<td>Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference – for agencies to discuss high risk victims of domestic violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRPF</td>
<td>No Recourse to Public Funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHSE</td>
<td>Personal, Health and Social Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RC</td>
<td>Rape Crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RUS?</td>
<td>R-U-Safe? Sexual Exploitation Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SARC</td>
<td>Sexual Assault Referral Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDVC</td>
<td>Specialist Domestic Violence Court</td>
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<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>Supporting People – funding to provide housing-related support</td>
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<tr>
<td>VAWGS</td>
<td>Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy – national government strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>WPP</td>
<td>Workplace Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>WWA</td>
<td>Wycombe Women’s Aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YPFPP</td>
<td>Young Person Freedom Programme</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### 5.ii) Scoping document for the review

| Membership | Lesley Clarke (Chairman)  
| Other Members to be confirmed.  
| Co-optees: One voluntary sector representative; one member invited from each District Council |
| Officer contact | Madeleine Thorpe (01296 382140) |
| Background to the review and key areas to be addressed | The Countywide Community Safety Partnership (Safer & Stronger Board) is the partnership body with responsibility for co-ordinating crime and disorder reduction across the county. It has set one of its top three priorities as tackling domestic violence. The OSCC has statutory responsibility for scrutinising the work of the crime & disorder partnership.  

The aim of the review is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Countywide Domestic Violence Strategy and its implementation with a view to identifying service gaps, making recommendations to strengthen co-ordination of services; ensure a joined-up commissioning approach; and identify any potential improvements to services and clarify resource needs.  

The review will cover all aspects of the Strategy; with a particular focus on co-ordination; prevention and early intervention. The review will build upon a self-assessment (audit commission toolkit) be completed by the BCC Community Safety Team.  

The key issues to address are:  
- How effectively are services and agencies working together to tackle domestic violence?  
- How effective are the commissioning arrangements to maximise value for money and ensure a joined-up approach across the county?  
- To what extent does the commissioning approach support a Big Society, community self-help approach?  
- To what extent do agencies work together to address the needs of the whole family, including children?  
- Are the current support services offered meeting the needs of survivors of domestic violence, and if not what are the service gaps?  
- Are services meeting the needs of different groups, including Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women; men; and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT), and are there any specific issues that need to be addressed?  
- How is honour-based violence being addressed within services/agencies and the local community and what further work needs to be done?  
- What is being done to challenge the cultural acceptance of domestic violence?  
- What “relationships education” do children receive in Buckinghamshire schools to educate about domestic violence and how can we ensure that this is ongoing in the new schools governance climate?  
- To what extent is BCC working with young people to reduce the risk of current and future violence relationships? |
To what extent is domestic violence identified & reported by practitioners and the public and what more could be done?  
How effective is work to reduce repeat offending, and work with perpetrators?  
What are the risks and opportunities in regard to changes in future funding arrangements?

| Anticipated outcomes | A good understanding of the range of impacts domestic violence has on people’s lives  
| | Identification of issues and need in Bucks and the opportunities and risks associated with gaps/projects at risk of closing  
| | A report with recommendations to the County Council’s Cabinet and Safer and Stronger Partnership Board to make improvements, including on the coordination and commissioning of services.  
| | Specific actions identified to be included in the next Countywide Domestic Violence Strategy as a result of the scrutiny review.  
| | A higher profile and ownership of domestic violence work across services within the Council and partners.  
| | An insight into the experiences of service users.

Link to Council Corporate Plan priority: Priority – Helping the most vulnerable

- We will support the most vulnerable to live safely, with dignity and respect

Methodology

- Self-assessment exercise  
- Written evidence  
- Oral evidence (Dec-Jan)  
- Visits to Women’s Refuges  
- Interviews  
- Use of existing survey data and analysis  
- Commissioning qualitative research (if needed)  
- Calling an End to Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2010

Public Involvement: Tbc

Key background papers

- Safer Bucks Plan 2011/12  
- Countywide Domestic Violence Strategy 2009-2012  
- Thames Valley Domestic Violence Strategy

Evidence to be provided by:

- Cabinet Member for Community Engagement  
- Cabinet Member for Children’s Services  
- Community Safety Team  
- Domestic and Community Violence Board (facilitated discussion at meeting)  
- Children & Young People (Safeguarding)  
- Adult Social Care  
- Safeguarding in Education  
- Bucks Safeguarding Children’s Board/Adults Board  
- Youth Offending Service  
- Thames Valley Police  
- Women’s Aid (Wycombe; Aylesbury Vale)  
- Victim Support  
- RELATE  
- Fresh Start
- Harmoni for Health
- MK Act
- Probation Service
- PCT/GP Collaboratives
- Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
- Crown Prosecution Service and Her Majesty’s Courts Service (HMCS)
- Other Local Authorities or VCS projects identified as beacons of good practice
- Housing Associations/District Councils

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equalities Impact</th>
<th>The review will include a focus on the extent to which domestic violence services are accessible and tailored to meet the needs of specific groups such as BME Women; men; and LGBT.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outline timetable</td>
<td>A detailed timetable will be agreed by the Task &amp; Finish Group. It is expected that a first meeting will take place in November.</td>
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| Reporting mechanism | OSCC – in the new Year  
Cabinet – Spring 2012 |
### 5.iii) List of written and oral evidence

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<tr>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Form of evidence</th>
<th>Contributor(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to domestic violence</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>Susie Yapp, Safer Bucks Partnership Manager Teresa Martin, Senior Domestic Violence Coordinator, Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-assessment of domestic violence services</td>
<td>Written submission; Oral</td>
<td>As row above.</td>
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<td>Domestic Violence incident data from Thames Valley</td>
<td>Written submission</td>
<td>Thames Valley Police</td>
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<td>Women’s Aid statistics 2010/11</td>
<td>Written submission</td>
<td>Aylesbury Women’s Aid, Wycombe Women’s Aid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summary of provision for male victims of DV in Bucks</td>
<td>Written submission</td>
<td>Sue Burke, Domestic and Sexual Violence Coordinator, BCC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commissioning DV services</td>
<td>Written submission; Oral</td>
<td>Susie Yapp, Lynda Ayres, Children and Young People’s Commissioner, BCC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Role of midwives and health visitors in DV</td>
<td>Written submission</td>
<td>Bucks Healthcare</td>
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<td>Domestic Abuse in BME communities</td>
<td>Written submission; Oral</td>
<td>Sue Burke, Paradigm Housing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raising awareness of DVA</td>
<td>Written submission; Oral</td>
<td>Sue Burke</td>
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<tr>
<td>Healthy relationships education in schools</td>
<td>Written submission; Oral</td>
<td>Bill Moore, School Improvement Advisor, BCC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing provision</td>
<td>Written submission</td>
<td>Aylesbury Vale District Council</td>
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<td>South Bucks District Council</td>
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<td>Written submission</td>
<td>Wycombe District Council</td>
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<td>Policing Domestic Violence</td>
<td>Oral</td>
<td>DI Chris Inness, Thames Valley Police</td>
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<td>Outreach with Asian Communities</td>
<td>Oral</td>
<td>Asian Women’s Worker, Wycombe Women’s Aid</td>
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<td>Outreach work</td>
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<td>Commissioning services for children</td>
<td>Oral</td>
<td>Lynda Ayres, Simon Brown, Operations Manager, BCC</td>
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<td>Housing provision for those affected by DVA</td>
<td>Oral</td>
<td>Michael Veryard, Principal Housing Officer, Chiltern District Council</td>
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<td>Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference - North</td>
<td>Visit</td>
<td>Agencies present: Bucks Healthcare NHS Trust (health visitor)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Oasis Partnership (alcohol services)</td>
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<td>Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust.</td>
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<td>Safeguarding Children, BCC</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults, BCC</td>
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<td>SMART CJS (drug services)</td>
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<td>Thames Valley Police Thames Valley Probation</td>
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<td>Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust</td>
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<td>Women’s Aid (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experiences and views of DVA services</td>
<td>Visit</td>
<td>Women using outreach and refuge services at Aylesbury and Wycombe Women’s Aid</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012-2015 Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>Agencies present at Strategy Day 25/01/12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wycombe Mind peer advocacy group</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Julia Wassell, Task and Finish Group Member</td>
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<td>Domestic Violence in BME Communities</td>
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<td>Ranjula Takdora, Equalities Officer, BCC</td>
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<td>School Admissions for children in refuge</td>
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<td>Debbie Munday, Admissions Manager, BCC</td>
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<td>Awareness of DVA in Buckinghamshire</td>
<td>Online questionnaire</td>
<td>County, District and Parish Councillors and Clerks</td>
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<td>2009-2012 Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy and action plan</td>
<td>Desk based research</td>
<td>Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership</td>
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<td>Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004</td>
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<td>Freedom Charity</td>
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<td><a href="https://www.freedomcharity.org.uk/">https://www.freedomcharity.org.uk/</a></td>
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<td>Project Description</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Reference/Website</td>
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<td>Newham Asian Women’s Project</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.nawp.org">www.nawp.org</a> – 29/12/11</td>
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<td>Violence against women in rural and urban areas</td>
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<td>McCarry M. and Williamson, E. (2009), University of Bristol</td>
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<td><a href="https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/">https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/</a></td>
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<td>Refuge/NSPCC research project</td>
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<td>Teresa Martin</td>
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