

Meeting:	Safer Bromley Partnership Strategic Group
Date:	24 March 2011
Subject:	Sustaining Domestic Abuse Advocacy Project
Author:	Colin Newman, Head of Community Safety colin.newman@bromley.gov.uk

1 SUMMARY

1.1 This report sets out proposals that are currently under consideration for the continuation of the Domestic Abuse Advocacy project from 1 April 2011. The report covers the background to the development of the service, performance against established targets and the proposed funding regime for the coming three years. Domestic Abuse Advocacy has been delivered within the borough since 2007, initially funded by pump priming funds to support the delivery of Local Area Agreements until March 2010. The current year has been financed through a combination of Partnership funds, Council funding and a small element of Home Office grant.

2 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 The Strategic Group is asked to

- Note the information contained within the report, and
- Support the proposal being made to the Council's Executive in order to secure funding for Domestic Abuse Advocacy in the period 2011 to 2014.

3 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 The Domestic Abuse Advocacy Project was established in 2007 as part of a plan to address the borough's low level conviction rate for Domestic Violence (12% was the declared baseline at the start of the project). Evidence indicated that there was a considerable "fall out" rate between perpetrators being charged with the commission of an assault and the achievement of a satisfactory conviction for the offence. In many cases this was believed to arise because victims felt unable to complete the process of prosecution due to a lack of support and limited information. Advocacy works by providing a named individual advocate for all those medium and high risk cases referred who will act as a support, guide and point of advice for victims. The availability of this ongoing support is demonstrated as having a positive impact on increasing the rates of convictions in cases of Domestic Violence.

3.2 The key stated outcome of the Advocacy Project is the provision of a high profile and improved response to Domestic Violence, contributing to the deterrence of such offending within the Borough. The Advocates work closely with victims of Domestic Violence to provide support, advice and guidance throughout the process of pursuing prosecutions against perpetrators. In addition to the provision of advocacy services, the Safer Bromley Partnership has developed a range of additional interventions to support the victims of Domestic Abuse within the borough, whether that be increased proactivity in Police responses or the provision of self-help groups and empowerment training programmes such as the Freedom Project. This has ensured that advocacy has not developed in isolation but has been supported by the growth of additional wrap-around services at limited extra cost in cash terms.

3.3 The development and continued delivery of the Advocacy project was initiated at the time when Domestic Violence was given additional focus when the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection appointed his deputy as the Domestic Violence Champion for the borough. Since this time the issue of Domestic Violence has been reviewed and monitored both by the Portfolio Holder and the Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee for Public Protection. As such, there has been pressure for the continued delivery of services to reduce the harm caused by Domestic Violence within the borough. The agreed targets for the Advocacy project, negotiated at the outset with the Government Office for London, were as follows (the initial “reward” grant available for successful performance is included in brackets):

- Increase the conviction rate for Domestic Violence (£315,000)
- Increase the number of incidents of Domestic Violence reported (£252,000)
- Increase the proportion of domestic violence incidents leading to sanctioned detections (£63,000)

3.4 On completion of the project (in March 2010), the targets were achieved, and the Domestic Advocacy project was on course to generate a reward payment of £630,000. However, the decision was made by the new Coalition Government to reduce the overall reward funding available by 50% during 2010. The table below highlights the targets agreed and the final detail of the submission to the Home Office in support of the claim for Performance Reward Grant (PRG) under the agreement:

Indicator	Without Reward	With Reward	Maximum Amount of PRG on Indicator	Final Measure (Month & Year)	Enhancement	Final Audited Outturn	Amount of PRG Payable	PRG at 50%
Increase in convictions for domestic violence	271	342	£315,000	31-Mar-10	71	422	£315k	£157,500
Increase in incidents of Domestic Violence	9147	9355	£63,000	31-Mar-10	208	10405	£63K	£31,500
Increase in	1718	1869	£252,000	21-Mar-10	151	2420	£252k	£126,000

incidents leading to detection								
TOTAL							£630k	£315k

3.6 Within the Council, the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Safety has lobbied to ensure that the full £315,000 in reward funding is made available to the Public Protection Portfolio. The proposed allocation of this reward funding will be considered by the Council's Executive Committee in April 2011. In recognition of the success of Domestic Abuse Advocacy and the positive impact for victims of crime, it is proposed that funding be made available from within the reward allocation to fund the provision of the Advocacy over the coming three years. To provide the services of two Domestic Abuse Advocates for the coming three years, it is proposed that a budget of £80,000 per annum be made available from the reward funding. As such, the Council's Executive Committee will consider a proposal that a total funding allocation of £240,000 is made available between 2011 and 2014.

3.7 It is proposed that Victim Support continue to be commissioned to provide this service. Support in kind is available from the Metropolitan Police in Bromley in the form of office accommodation and facilities. It is proposed that, in order to ensure the continued emphasis on improving services and achieving stretching targets, an action plan and suite of associated milestones and targets is used as a delivery framework. These final targets are currently being finalised but the performance regime is likely to include the following indicators:

- Increased conviction rates
- Reduced withdrawals from the criminal justice process
- Increased arrest rate
- Increased sanctioned detection rate
- Reduction in housing applications where domestic abuse is cited
- Decrease in child protection cases where domestic abuse is cited.