

26th November 2009

Domestic Violence Forum

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr G Perry – Communities and Partnerships

Summary of report:

To provide an update for the Scrutiny and Performance Panel on the work of the Domestic Violence Forum, the sources of its funding and future sustainability issues.

Background papers:

Target Action Plan
Sustainability Strategy
Children & Young Peoples Plan

Reason for scrutiny:

Members have expressed an interest in scrutinising the work carried out by the Domestic Violence Forum, the nature of its funding and future funding opportunities.

This Forum has previously received substantial funding through various grants allocated through the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), and there is interest about the availability of future funding to maintain the current level of work.

Domestic Violence is an important indicator within the local area agreement but has no mainstream funding.

The specific services provided by Walsall Domestic Violence Forum have enabled the local area agreement stretch targets to be met and have consequently attracted a 'reward grant' to be allocated by the Local Strategic Partnership.

Resource and legal considerations:

This report provides a summary of the funding of the Walsall Domestic Violence Forum (WDVF) and sets out ongoing resourcing issues. Funding for this work is via the Area Based Grant, and allocations for projects are based on the strategic priorities approved by the Safer Walsall Partnership, typically via a targeted action planning approach. Overall there has been a reduction in the availability of grant funding allocated through the Local Strategic Partnership. There is no mainstream funding available to support this valuable work although there is a significant investment across the local partners in terms of staff time to support the multi agency risk assessment conferences, the Domestic Abuse response Team (DART) and in the delivery of their main stream services. There has been an increased reliance on WDVF volunteers to maintain support services with a reduction in the grant funding allocated, or by paid staff working additional unpaid hours.

Citizen impact:

The work of the Domestic Violence Forum has a significant impact on vulnerable communities and the perpetrators and victims of violent crimes and children within these families.

Environmental impact:

It is not anticipated that the scrutiny exercise will have direct impact upon the environment.

Performance management:

Scrutiny Panel's recommendation will help to shape the future direction for partnership working supporting the activities to combat domestic violence set out within this report.

Equality Implications:


An Equality Impact Assessment has not been carried out in connection with this report. Equalities implications are considered in the development and delivery of interventions and programmes.

Consultation:

The contents of this report have been considered for accuracy, by the Walsall Domestic Violence Forum Domestic Violence Co-ordinator, and by representatives of the Police and Safer Walsall Partnership.

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Background -

- 1.1 Walsall Domestic Violence Forum (WDVF) was formed in 1992 by a number of people working with those caught up in violence between partners or within families. The Forum aims to offer professionals who work within the field of domestic violence the opportunity to gain support from one another through sharing experiences and knowledge and the Forum has also developed a range of services targeted at victims, perpetrators and children. The Forum also aims to inform policy and decision-making in relation to domestic violence in Walsall.
- 1.2 WDVF is a charitable company limited by guarantee that was incorporated on 6 August 2003 and began delivering specialist support services in 1999. Its objectives are to provide a pro-active multi agency response to all victims of Domestic violence. It also seeks to provide relief of poverty, distress and sickness experienced by the victims of domestic abuse through influencing public policy and working practice in their favour. WDVF provides a holistic range of services to deliver victim and child focused interventions together with direct work with perpetrators to bring about long-term change to further protect victims and their children.
- 1.3 Its published report for its trustees for the financial year ending March 2008 states:

“We have a number of dedicated services to provide support, advice and information to people experiencing domestic abuse. These include two 24 hour help-lines to meet the needs of service-users from a diverse community. These services are widely promoted via regular advertising in local media and the distribution of leaflets to a wide range of places accessed by the public including: medical surgeries and centres, police stations, housing and social care offices, community and leisure centres etc. We also provide various modules of training in domestic abuse and related issues. This serves to raise awareness of professional and community members, allowing them to respond appropriately and effectively to their service users. Walsall Domestic Violence Forum brings together professionals from across the range of organisations working with people affected by domestic abuse. These include representatives from: police, probation, social care, housing, health and voluntary sector (Victim Support, Relate, Citizens Advice Bureau etc). This multi-agency partnership has now produced a second three-year strategy to reduce domestic abuse, having successfully met, or exceeded, all targets as set in the initial strategy produced in 2000. Our Crisis Intervention Service is in place to reduce sickness and distress in victims of domestic abuse following an incident.”
- 1.2 Annual reports identify that there are 60 fully trained and experienced volunteers at any one time during 2007/8, who between them worked an estimated 10,000 volunteer hours during the year. They conservatively valued this volunteer time at £8.50 per hour, indicating volunteer effort exceeding £85,000 per year in value.
- 1.3 The day to day operations of the company are managed by the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator who is assisted by a team that includes three Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVA) who oversee volunteers for the Crisis Intervention Service, Stepping Stones and SAYA help lines and support services.

1.4 The WDVF offers direct interventions and supports two multi- agency partnerships, these consist of:

- **DART:**

The Domestic Abuse Response Team is a multi-disciplinary team that responds to all police referrals. It includes Police, Health, Social Care and WDVF personnel who assess all incidents of domestic abuse on a daily basis. The team decide on the most appropriate intervention and lead agency. The team use an assessment model in operation across the whole of the West Midlands This group ensures all domestic violence victims receive a response. DART was one of two areas in the West Midlands to pilot an assessment tool to identify specific risks to children. Multi-agency representatives from neighbouring boroughs visited DART, which was held up as a model of best practice, to assist them in the development of similar interventions in their own areas.

During each quarter there have been over 700 cases referred to the DART, with over 50% receiving direct Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) support.

- **MARAC**

Multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) considers all cases where there is serious or life threatening risk. MARAC takes place fortnightly and enables information sharing and action planning around appropriate interventions between partners, in order to secure the safety of victims and children.

The introduction of DART has seen a reduction of cases going to MARAC, through early intervention.

1.5 WDVF facilitates and administrates the daily DART meetings and holds the operating licence for the Home Office approved 'MODUS' database system which collates information regarding all incidents and provides statistical information to partner agencies. WDVF support DART and MARAC with the following services:

- **Family Support Team:**

The Family Support Team is made up of a Specialist Social Worker and three Family Support Assistants. They are able to respond to the particular needs of children who have or are experiencing domestic abuse within their families. They provide direct work with victims and children to allow them to come to terms with what they have seen and heard. Referrals in respect of child protection are made to Children's Services where appropriate.

- **Support Services**

- a) Crisis Intervention Service (C.I.S):**

The Crisis Intervention Service is a response service to meet the needs of victims of domestic abuse. The service operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and provides:

- Support and advice.
- Ongoing support.
- Court support.
- Transport to a place of safety.
- Sign-posting to available services.

The Service takes many referrals from the Police following a crisis incident and the telephone is staffed by Duty Operators who pass on any direct work to the many volunteers that provide support to victims and their children. With reduced financial support this service now operates during office hours from Monday to Thursday and for 24 hours from 9 am Friday to 9 am Monday.

An evaluation of DART carried out in January 2009 by Worcester University, highlights that where victims engaged with the Crisis Intervention Service at the time of the incident, the repeat rate fell from 32% to 12%, thus playing a major part in achieving the stretch targets. Many DART clients are referred to the Crisis Intervention Service for initial contact and ongoing support from the Duty Operators and volunteers. Without the Crisis Intervention Service, it is likely that there would be a dramatic decrease in numbers of victims receiving support and an increase in the repeat incident rate.

b) Outreach Service:

A specialist outreach support service developed with grant funding from the Equality & Human Rights Commission (EHRC) for people from 'hard to reach' groups including: lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and trans-gender; male victims, older people, people with disabilities and people with substance misuse issues.

c) Stepping Stones:

Fully trained and experienced volunteers provide support and information to people experiencing domestic abuse staff this 24-hour telephone help-line. Refuge accommodation is obtained for clients requiring a place of safety.

d) SAYA:

Another 24-hour help-line, developed specifically for the BME communities where advice is sought in the Asian languages. Volunteers are able to speak a variety of languages including Bengali, Gujarati, Hindu, Punjabi and Urdu. They also understand the cultural issues that often prevent women from seeking help.

1.6 Work with Perpetrators - S.A.F.E:

Stopping Aggression in the Family Environment (S.A.F.E) is a 32-week programme for men who wish to stop abusing their partners. Separate support is available for the female partners of men attending the programme. There are currently 12 men on the programme. A similar programme has been commissioned by Dudley Council but limited promotion has resulted in relatively low demand.

1.7 Training Programme:

Walsall Domestic Violence Forum also offers a training programme for professionals and volunteers. Individually chargeable modules (@£40) currently include:-

- Domestic Abuse Awareness.
- Domestic Abuse and Child Protection.
- Adult Protection.
- Supporting Victims.

Previously supported by Dudley College, New Deal for Communities and the Big Lottery this training programme is now self financing.

1.8 **School & Youth Programme / Teenage Support Service**

This service has been suspended due to current funding restrictions and WDFV are seeking to make external grant applications with a view to reinstating them on a borough-wide basis. WDFV are concerned about ceasing these interventions as approximately 30% of all referrals to DART relate to victims aged 15 to 24 years.

- 1.9 A Domestic Violence Steering Group was established with representation from The Police, Childrens Services and representatives of the Safeguarding Children Board, Supported Housing, the tPCT, The Domestic Violence Coordinator, and Probation Services, and was chaired by the Director of the Safer Walsall Borough partnership. This steering group has not met for some time. A meeting has been scheduled of this Steering Group by the new Head of Public Safety for 1 December 2009 to take stock of current issues and to review the Domestic Violence Strategy which expired in 2008.

2. **Domestic Violence in Walsall**

- 2.1 Domestic Abuse is defined 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'. Domestic Abuse is a concern to the Safer Walsall Partnership and is not restricted to just violence incidents. There were 4,129 incidents reported to the police between February 2008 and January 2009 that were flagged as 'Domestic related', an average of 344 incidents per month. Of the 4,129 incidents, 34% related to criminal offences. The level of Domestic Abuse incidents over the past year represents an increase of 6.4% when compared to the corresponding months of the previous year.

- 2.2 As described later in paragraph 4, it has been recognised from the 2009/10 Borough Strategic Assessment that Violent Crime, with a specific focus on Domestic Abuse and Town Centre Violence, is a high priority.

- 2.3 A total of 1350 incidents were recorded as 'crimes'. Domestic Abuse offences account for 6.4% of Total Recorded Crime and 24% of all violent crime, which represents an increase where compared with the last strategic period (where 18% of violent crime were domestic related). It is still underreported in Walsall and there is evidence to suggest that attitudes held by offender and victims still need challenging regarding this offence type. Nationally 25% of Violence offences are Domestic related. The majority of offences were linked to violence (87%) with the remainder comprising of Damage (12%) and Burglary/Theft (1%) offences.

- 2.4 A breakdown of the locations of domestic violence shows the top 5 neighbourhood areas for incidents of this nature that have been reported to the police, which accounted for 36% of domestic abuse incidents.

Leamore – 362 incidents
Willenhall – 327 incidents
Bloxwich – 302 incidents
Bentley – 274 incidents
Coalpool – 210 incidents

Notable increases in reported incidents have occurred in Rough Hay (63%), Willenhall North/New Invention (55%), Bentley (53%) and Leamore (41%) whilst incidents have reduced in Park Hall/Chuckery (26%), Birchills (20%) and Sheffield/Rushall (18%). Domestic abuse is a significant contributory factor to the high rate of children with child protection plans and children becoming looked after.

- 2.5 National publicity around the topic of Domestic Abuse is likely to have an impact on levels of reported incidents in the Borough and there is speculation that the current economic downturn will also have an impact on reports, especially considering that more people are choosing to consume alcohol in the home. The dramatic increase in unemployment also adds to the frustrations faced by families. However, Domestic Abuse is still a vastly under-reported offence and the expectation is that the level of reported incidents and offences will continue to increase especially whilst attitudes towards whether Domestic Abuse is a crime or not amongst offenders and victims remains. Despite anticipated increases the partnership needs to continue to encourage victims of domestic incidents to come forward in order to prevent this problem from going 'underground' again.
- 2.6 A national survey conducted by the Home Office in February 2009 shows results that suggested that one in seven people believe that it was acceptable in some circumstances for a man to hit their partner. Whilst the overall majority of people questioned in this survey stated that it was never acceptable to hit or slap a woman the poll found that those aged 25-39 and over 65 in lower social class groups were more likely to hold such views. Findings of this nature simply confirm that attitudes around Domestic Abuse, held by potential offenders and victims particularly in areas of deprivation need challenging. In Walsall, 49% of Domestic Abuse offenders are aged 25-39 with an average age of 31.
- 2.7 WDFV have commented that reductions in their annual grant funding have impacted upon their ability to advertise and promote of services in local media, making it more difficult for victims to obtain support, and this have directly attributed the reduction of calls to the Stepping Stones and SAYA help-lines to this.
- 2.8 Table 1 overleaf provided an analysis of the activities handled through WDFV based on the published annual reports to the Charities Commission. As the WDFV has no mainstream funding, consequently, all services are at risk if grant funding is not available.

Table 1 Analysis of the activities handled through WDFV

Activity	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9
Crisis Intervention Service:	534 referrals	802 referrals	529 referrals	401 referrals via 24 hr service 141 drop-in group sessions (3 p/wk)
DART:			1826 referrals	2787 referrals 1531 victims supported by IDVAs
DARA			25 referrals	55 referrals
Stepping Stones:	662 referrals	519 referrals	218 referrals	203 referrals
SAYA	892 referrals	375 referrals	166 referrals	142 referrals
Support groups				486 beneficiaries
School and Youth Programme:	575 adults 1223 children	delivered to 2652 young people	delivered to 694 young people	Delivered to 787 children and young people
Family Support Team			delivered to 132 children	Individual work carried out with 112 children
Outreach service				344 beneficiaries
S.A.F.E.:		74 applications	57 applications	69 perpetrators self refer – 47 weekly programme sessions
Training Programme:	2216 participants	delivered to 1853 delegates	delivered to 528 delegates	delivered to 1371 delegates
Refuge/ safe accommodation				30 women transported to refuge/safe accommodation
Persons accessing WDFV services				4826

2.8 Over the past 3 years all domestic violence targets have been achieved through good partnership working and joint up working practices. All LAA stretch targets have been achieved. Table 2 shows examples of how the DV Team achieved the LAA stretch targets which were set to ensure repeat victims of DV are reduced and more perpetrators are brought to justice.

Table 2 LAA stretch targets

	Target	Outcome
Number of Repeat victims	Not to exceed 30%	There have been 27.4% repeat victims.
Number of perpetrators brought to justice	18.2%	23.8% Brought to Justice.

2.9 In drawing up the new Local Area Agreement, there was a concern that the former stretch targets may not have been encouraging reporting. Accordingly, in addition to **NI 32 (Reduce domestic violence re-offending rates)** a revised LAA Local measure around domestic violence has been included in the new Local Area Agreement – **Referrals to children’s social care for Domestic Violence**. This indicator is monitored closely through the Childrens Services Specialist Board. Last year (2008/9) the annual referral target was 525 and the outturn for referrals was 406.

2.10 However, the services provided through WDVF are also seen as a priority to ensure DV victims continue to be supported which impacts directly towards **NI 20 – Assault with injury crime**. Current performance data has identified that performance on NI 20 is at **Amber** as there have been 1191 crimes committed against a target of 1160. NI 20 accounts for a large proportions of crimes committed including mainly actual bodily harm.

2.11 The Childrens Services Specialist Board has also flagged concern, as at Q1 social care referrals for domestic violence were at 139 against a target of 125. However, by Q2 the half yearly referrals were 263 against a target of 250, potentially indicating that the initial increase in referrals may be settling down.

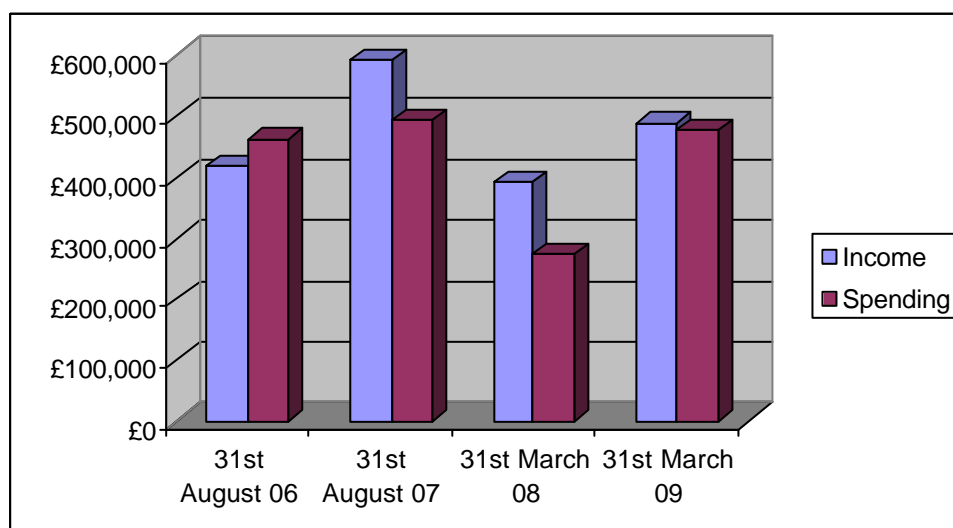
3 Resourcing

3.1 Historically, the DV Forum has benefited from significant grant funding, from the Childrens Fund, New Deal for Communities, and the National Lottery, and from Walsall council towards specific projects and towards the overall operations and key posts. Additional income has been raised through training and fund raising. The following financial information as shown in Tables 3 and 4, and plotted in Graph 1, has been obtained from the Charities Commission website.

Table 3 Summary of income and expenditure

Financial year end (FYE)	Income	Spending
31 Mar 2009	£489,732	£477,046
31 Mar 2008	£393,339	£276,491
31 Aug 2007	£592,095	£494,945
31 Aug 2006	£419,554	£462,924

Graph 1 Summary of income and expenditure



Note change in financial years from August to March in 2007/8

Table 4 - Breakdown of income (from published accounts)

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Donations/gifts	53,458	19,383	578,593	368,206
Walsall council	140,404	139,829		
New Deal	106,886	87,815		
Big Lottery	170,226	105,999		
Childrens Fund	17,264	14,555		
Local networks	7,000			
Training	25,360	51,973		
Bank interest	601	348		
Other income			13,502	25,133
	521,199	419,902	592,095	393,339

- 3.2 It is understood that WDFV funding from March 2008 was made up of grants from Safer Walsall Partnership, Children's Services, tPCT, the Home Office, The Equality and Human Rights Commission and income generation amounting to £359,000.
- 3.3 In 2008/09 WDFV benefited from £152,420 from WMBC transitional funding, and Children's Service provided a further £132,000 for FST Service and DARA Perpetrator Programme. It is understood that WDFV was advised that this transitional funding was being provided to enable WDFV to explore alternative funding streams.
- 3.4 Unconnected to WDFV, Caldmore Housing operated three Domestic Violence Refuges through the Supporting People programme at a cost of £380,000.
- 3.5 WDFV has indicated the need to draw upon their reserves to continue to deliver services to support and safeguard victims and children, having suspended the School and Youth programme and Teenage Support Services. They report a concern that new funding is needed to maintain services as the reserves are being depleted. WDFV continues to apply for external grant funding and has also begun a fund-raising campaign.
- 3.6 Funding for DV activities during the current year was considered as part of a Target Drive Action Plan considered by the Safer Walsall Executive Group in terms of the following national indicator set and PSA 23 and PSA 25.
- Reduce assault with injury crime rate (NI 20) by 4%
 - Reduce serious acquisitive crime rate (NI 16) by 4%
 - Reduce re-offending rate of prolific and priority offenders (NI 30) to 19%
 - Reduce re-offending rate by young offenders (NI 19)
 - Reduce perceptions of antisocial behaviour (Local target)
 - Domestic Violence (local target)
 - Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT)
- 3.6 Table 5 shows the activities considered within scope of this target action plan and the funding allocated from the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund for 2009/10. All funded programmes/interventions are required to be delivered by the end of March 2010. A review of progress against the targets and outcomes is planned for December 2009, and this will inform the funding allocation process for 2010/11.

Table 5 Funding allocated from the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund 2009/10

Activity	Performance indicator	SSCF Allocation	Other funding
BeSafe (Walsall Night time economy)	NI 5, NI 16, NI 17, NI 20, local domestic violence indicator	£50,000	£110,250 WNF £60,000 BCU
Support to Victims of domestic violence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pump priming allocation – to be allocated • Direct support services to children (Childrens services) • TPCT 	NI 32 reduce DV re-offending rates and local indicator	£75,000 £2,628	 £132,000 £30,000
CCTV	NI 17, NI 20 NI 21, NI 27	£106,000	
Borough Tasking		No funding	£76,000 BCU
Walsall Alcohol Arrest Referral Scheme (WAARS) and Alcohol Treatment reduction (ATR)	NI 39	£60,000	
Borough Analyst		£40,000	
Prolific and Priority Offenders Offender Management Coordinator	NI 17, NI 19, NI 30, NI 143, NI144	No funding	TBA £24,000
Serene 3	NI 16, NI 17, NI 20 PSA 13,14,23,25	No funding	
Community Engagement and consultation	NI 1, NI 4, NI 17	No funding	
YISP/YIP	NI 19	No funding	
DAAT Contributions 2008/9 and 2009/10		£121,468	

4.0 Future Issues

- 4.1 The strategic assessment published in July 2009, covering the period of February 2008 to January 2009 has tried to provide an accurate picture of the issues to the Safer Walsall Partnership, in order to review the Partnership priorities recommended in the Strategic Assessment of 2007/08, and to highlight the key priorities to take forward. Table 6 summarises the previous priorities and those identified for the future. This shows that Domestic Abuse remains a top priority for the Borough.

Table 6 Strategic priorities

Strategic Assessment of 2007/08 Priorities	New Strategic Priorities approved
Volume Crime (Violence, Anti Social Behaviour, Criminal Damage)	Violent Crime – Specific focus on Domestic Abuse and Town Centre Violence
Acquisitive Crime (Burglary, Robbery, Vehicle Crime) Drug & Alcohol Misuse	Anti Social Behaviour – Adopt a holistic approach to tackling multi agency forms of ASB
Fear Of Crime	Drug and Alcohol Misuse
Improve Community Cohesion and Social Inclusion Reduce Crime & Disorder in high crime areas	Community – Specific focus on Counter Terrorism, improving Community Cohesion and tackling Fear of Crime

- 4.2 Total Recorded Crime in Walsall has reduced by 12.9% between February 2008 and January 2009. Anti Social Behaviour has reduced by 7.5% during the same time period. Key reductions have occurred in Violent Crime, Acquisitive Crime and Criminal Damage. Walsall is improving when compared with its Most Similar Groups by being placed 7th out of 15 of similar partnerships – an improvement of two places. The only increases in crime have occurred in lower level Acquisitive Crime types such as Shop Theft and Bilking offences. Violence Against The Person offences have reduced by 18% and as a whole have not been affected by changes made to Home Office counting rules. There have been significant reductions in levels of young teenagers aged 13-15 becoming a victim of violent crime, although the age group most likely to become a victim are the 18-25s. Male on Female violence has increased slightly, due to increased publicity around Domestic Abuse. Reported Violent Crime cost the Borough at least £27m in the past year. A large proportion of Violent Crime occurs in Walsall Town Centre and is alcohol related although there is an emergence of powder cocaine use.
- 4.3 Reported Domestic Abuse is increasing with 24% of Violence offences that are domestic related. It is still underreported in Walsall and there is evidence to suggest that attitudes held by offender and victims still need challenging regarding this offence type.
- 4.4 The report made some additional recommendations relating to Domestic Abuse as detailed below, that the Partnership should:
- Continue to promote the reporting of Domestic Abuse incidents, particularly targeting young people and those who live in deprived areas.

- Consult with Substance Misuse agencies regarding provisions that can be put into place to combat the anticipated increase of alcohol related violence within the home.
- Consider opportunities around the use of covert CCTV within homes to tackle Domestic Abuse.

4.5 It is proposed that these recommendations, the issues of resourcing partnership work to tackle domestic violence and the review of the Domestic Violence Strategy are the primary agenda items for discussion at the forthcoming Domestic Violence Steering Group meeting.