

Council Meeting – 11 January 2010

Notice of Motion – The Domestic Violence Forum

1 Introduction

The following notice of motion has been submitted from Councillors Robertson, Oliver, Wilkes, Sarohi, Chambers and Young:

“This Council recognises:

- The enormously valuable work done in the Borough since 1992 by the Walsall Domestic Violence Forum (WDVF) working with those caught up in violence between partners or within families with 4826 people accessing this service in the last 12 months.*
- Recognises that over 10,000 volunteer hours were contributed to this service during 2007/8 year.*
- Acknowledges the considerable contribution made by WDVF to this Council by assisting us to exceed our stretch targets. An example is highlighted in the Crisis Intervention Service where repeat incidents in this year were reduced by an additional 12%.*

Council expresses concern that the Forum has been subject to a £77k funding cut this year and has been notified of even greater cuts next year. Council resolves to work closely with the WDVF to enable full restoration of that funding and an expansion of this vital service in Walsall.”

2 Background

What is the Domestic Violence Forum?

Walsall (WDVF) is a charitable company whose objectives are to provide a pro-active multi agency response to all victims of domestic violence and to influence public policy and working practice. The Forum brings together professionals from across the range of organisations working with people affected by domestic abuse including representatives from the police, probation, social care, housing, health and the voluntary sector.

It supports the Domestic Abuse Response Team (DART) which is a multi-disciplinary team that responds to all police referrals for domestic violence. The DART 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 and ensures all domestic violence victims receive a response.

A Domestic Violence Steering Group, chaired by the Council's Head of Public Safety, is in place with representation from all relevant agencies and the WDVF, to co-ordinate the Borough's overall response to this issue.

How is the Forum funded?

Historically, the WDFV has benefited from significant grant funding from the Children's Fund, New Deal for Communities, and the National Lottery, as well as from Walsall Council. Additional income has been raised through training and fund raising. Over the last four financial years, the Forum has spent an average of £427,000 per year. Its expenditure during 2008/09 was £477,000.

In 2008/09 WDFV benefited from transitional funding of £152,420 from the Council while Children's Services provided a further £132,000. The Forum was advised at the time that this transitional funding was being provided to enable it to explore alternative funding streams.

Funding for this work is also provided via Area Based Grant, and allocations for projects are based on the strategic priorities approved by the Safer Walsall Partnership. Overall, there has been a reduction in the availability of grant funding allocated through the Partnership. Nevertheless domestic abuse is a priority for the Borough and therefore, £75,000 of the total available grant available this year, the second highest allocation to any programme, was allocated to the WDFV. In addition, £132,000 has again been provided by Children's Services for direct support services to children.

The Safer Walsall Partnership has not made any decisions on allocation of grant for 2010/11.

How is WDFV contributing to reducing domestic abuse?

WDFV clearly plays a very significant role providing support to victims of domestic violence and children within these families. This work sits alongside the role of statutory services which are supporting the multi agency risk assessment conferences, the Domestic Abuse Response Team (DART) and in the delivery of mainstream services. Over the past three years, all domestic violence targets have been met or exceeded (including targets within the Local Area Agreement) through good partnership working and coordinated working practices across all partners, including the WDFV. Some of this work is held up as best practice in the West Midlands.



Jamie Morris
Executive Director

31 December 2009