



BLT – Burton, Tamworth and Lichfield District Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse Forum

Terms of Reference

Background

Violence against women and girls is one of the most systemic and widespread violations of human rights worldwide. It takes place in every country, in peacetime as well as in situations of conflict and crisis, and affects women and girls regardless of age, ethnicity, or socio-economic status. It takes many forms, from domestic and sexual violence, to harmful practices such as child marriage, trafficking, and multiple forms of femicide. At the United Nations level, ending violence against women and girls has emerged as a top global priority in the last decade, resulting in new research, legislation and policy, and stronger prevention and response initiatives.

While the vast majority of domestic violence incidents are against women national statistics show that one in six men will be a victim at some stage of their life. Domestic violence against men has been around for a very long time but has largely been a hidden issue but over recent years male victims are increasingly speaking out and looking for support.

Local context

In Tamworth and Lichfield, practice based evidence has increased the knowledge base about violence against women, indicating an increase in recent years, with domestic violence being one of the most common but grossly under-reported forms of violence. Tamworth Borough and Lichfield District have therefore established the need for a domestic and sexual violence forum.

We will ensure that we build a forum, which will benefit both voluntary and statutory organisations.

At Tamworth Borough and Lichfield District we hope that the use of this forum, with improved partnership working clear objectives, will ensure that we work effectively together in a partnership, which will reduce domestic and sexual violence, and improve services for those affected by abuse.

Definition

Tamworth and Lichfield District has adopted the Home Office new definition of domestic abuse.

Domestic violence and abuse

The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is:

any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

- *psychological*
- *physical*
- *sexual*
- *financial*
- *emotional*

Controlling behaviour- a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour - an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

Harmful Practices

Tamworth Borough and Lichfield District has adopted the following definition by the Home Office for Forced Marriage:

Forced marriage is a hidden practice, where due to its nature the full scale of the issue is unknown. It can happen to both men and women, although most cases involve young women and girls aged between 16 and 25.

More information can be found at:

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/35530/forced-marriage-guidelines09.pdf

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Tamworth and Lichfield District has adopted the following definition by the Home Office for Female Genital Mutilation:

Female genital mutilation involves procedures that include the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons.

Carrying out FGM is a criminal offence under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003. It is also an offence for UK nationals or permanent UK residents to carry out FGM abroad, or to aid, abet, counsel or procure the carrying out of FGM abroad, even in countries where the practice is legal.

More information can be found at:

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/crime/FGM

and:

www.forwarduk.org.uk/key-issues/fgm

Sexual Violence and Abuse

Sexual violence and abuse (including child sexual abuse) are amongst the most serious and damaging crimes in our society. For victims and survivors, the impact can be devastating and traumatic, and may affect their physical, mental and sexual health for a long time to come. Persons who have suffered such abhorrent abuse deserve to be supported, treated with dignity and respect and see their abusers brought to justice.

Tamworth Borough and Lichfield District has adopted the following definition for Sexual violence/abuse:

Sexual violence and abuse can be defined as any behaviour perceived to be of a sexual nature, which is unwanted and takes place without consent or understanding.

Rape or sexual assault

Rape is when someone has penetrative sex with another person against their will. This includes vaginal, anal and oral penetration.

Sexual assault covers any other sort of sexual contact and behaviour that is unwanted, ranging from touching to any other activity if it is sexual.

Purpose of the Forum

The purpose of the forum is to reduce domestic and sexual violence, reduce repeat victimisation, and improve services across Tamworth Borough and Lichfield District. The forum will aim to ensure a local community response to domestic and sexual violence, and build upon the national strategy 'Violence against Women and Girls' (VAWGS) and Staffordshire's strategy 'Breaking the Cycle' adopting the following themed objectives as a framework:

- **Prevention** – establish innovative ways to raise awareness and reduce the incidences of domestic and sexual abuse
- **Provision** – ensure the provision of a comprehensive and co-ordinated range of services across Tamworth Borough and Lichfield District
- **Protection and Justice** – review and ensure the effective protection of victims, survivors and their children within the community and in their own homes.
- **Perpetrators** – promote services available and in the long term educate and challenge behaviours

Aims of the Forum

- To address domestic and sexual violence across the whole community irrespective of age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and lifestyle, including those living within the community on a temporary basis
- To identify gaps in service provision and make recommendations for the development of services, to improve the effectiveness of services in providing protection and support to people experiencing or affected by domestic violence, including children in households where such abuse is taking place.
- To share good practice, and create actions to improve and increase access to services
- To review the priorities for the area and to make recommendations regarding policy and practice to area Domestic Violence Strategic Boards and operational groups. As a partnership we shall review policies/procedures in place.
- To raise awareness and understanding of domestic violence amongst the general public with the aim of reducing tolerance of violence towards women and children and to educate and inform young people, to enable them to construct and maintain relationships built on trust and respect. This will include supporting Ideas from the community safety partnership campaigns
- To run campaigns alongside Home Office campaigns.
- To raise awareness in conjunction with International Women's Day.

- To support the effective implementation of Staffordshire's strategy 'Breaking the Cycle' for tackling domestic violence
- To raise awareness of domestic/sexual violence/abuse and the services available locally and nationally
- To continue to review training needs across Tamworth Borough and Lichfield District, and to provide and share specialist knowledge, support and advice within and outside scheduled meetings.
- To ensure the voice of victims and survivors of domestic abuse is heard.
- To develop and improve ways of addressing the behaviour of those responsible for domestic violence, by means of enforcement, including prosecution, and support for behaviour change. To identify mechanisms whereby perpetrators can be held accountable for their behaviour.

Key Principles and Values

Tamworth Borough and Lichfield District Domestic and Sexual Violence forum commits itself to raise awareness, recognise the impact of abuse, and reduce the incidences of domestic and sexual violence. It is vital that this approach to domestic and sexual violence is consistent, co-ordinated and innovative and must reflect the needs of all communities.

Schedule of Meetings

The forum will meet as a minimum, on a quarterly basis. Each meeting will focus on an area related to domestic and sexual violence/abuse, chosen by the forum, in relation to the four themed objectives or in response to new developments. Minutes will be distributed to all members and any actions to be taken will be done so within an agreed timescale.

The meeting will open with a recap of the previous meeting, informing all present of the actions taken and identifying any outstanding actions. In addition the meeting may consist of a presentation related to the area to be discussed. *It is important to remember that the forum shall not discuss individual cases.*



Membership of Tamworth and Lichfield District Domestic & Sexual Violence Forum

- Membership is open to all agencies who are members of the Tamworth and Lichfield Community Safety Partnerships.
- Members will have a clear understanding and agree to the definition of domestic and sexual violence for the Forum work
- A chair and co-chair will be elected by members of the Forum and reviewed annually.

The full membership of the Forum will be reviewed once every two years by a group elected by the Forum.

Members will be responsible for cascading information to their colleagues and will seek approval from relevant officers in their agencies/organisations to progress any developments in inter-agency working recommended or undertaken by the Forum. Each member should identify a nominated substitute to attend in their absence, to ensure consistency and continuity.

The circulation list consists of all members, and any other practitioners, who wish to receive information about the Forum. The list is managed by the Domestic Violence Co-ordinator (DVC) who may add members on request.

Every member of the Forum has the right to place items on each meeting's agenda. Each item must be received by the DVC, who is responsible for co-ordinating the work of the Forum with the Chair and Vice Chair, no later than 14 days before the date of the next meeting.

Agencies/Organisations represented

Although this list is not exhaustive, member(s) will be encouraged to act as representatives from each of the following agencies/organisations including:

- Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic backgrounds or Refugee (BAMER) Groups
- Children's Services
- Staffordshire Police
- Crown Prosecution Service
- Community Groups
- Community Psychology Services
- Domestic Violence Specialist Agencies
- Education Services
- Faith Groups

- Financial/Legal Advice Services
- Housing and Homelessness Services
- Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender Groups
- Local Authorities
- Mental Health
- NHS
- Older People Groups
- Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs)
- Probation Services
- Disability Groups
- Safeguarding Units
- Substance Misuse
- Vulnerable Adults Services
- Young People's Services
- Victim Support

Monitoring and Evaluation

Progress towards the stated aims and objectives will be reviewed once every two years.

Code of Conduct Guideline

Members of the Forum are expected to act with integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and respect for one another. All members are requested to be at the meetings on time.