



Minutes of the meeting of the MILTON KEYNES FORUM AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE held on WEDNESDAY 6 DECEMBER 2006 at 3.00 pm.

**Present**

T Moore (Chair)	-	Adams Moore Solicitors
A Taylor (Vice-Chair)	-	MK Women's Aid
Sgt P Searle	-	T.V.P. Domestic Violence Unit
I Chittenden	-	MK Women's Aid
J Pask	-	Giffen, Couch & Archer
H O'Neill	-	MK Race Equality Council
N Atkinson	-	MK Community Safety Team
S Lloyd Morris	-	Franklin Solicitors
J Croston	-	Lighthouse
D Mortimer	-	Men's Aid
D Higgins	-	Men's Aid
M Francis	-	MK PCT
D Butt	-	Thames Valley Probation Service.
G Roberts	-	MK Relate
Cllr P Seymour	-	MKC.
M Parrish	-	Greenleys Parish Centre

**Also Present:** M Toze - Committee Manager

**Apologies:**

C Thompson	-	MK PCT
M Henson	-	Educational Psychology Service
M Hunt	-	Neath Hill Health Centre
S Roberts	-	Thames Valley Police
S McGrory	-	Milton Keynes Council

**1.0 MINUTES**

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Milton Keynes Forum Against Domestic Violence held on 7 September 2006 be agreed as a correct record.

**2.0 BUSINESS CASE FOR LIGHTHOUSE**

The Forum received a report from N Atkinson on the business case for Lighthouse. The Forum noted that the future of Lighthouse was still being discussed within the Council. Neighbourhood Services and Learning & Development were currently considering their requirements for a frontline Domestic Violence Service. It was possible that the service would be moved away from Learning and Development and placed elsewhere, possibly within the Community Safety Team. It was also possible that the Lighthouse service would change, or be scaled down.

On 15 December a paper would be presented to the Statutory Officers' Support Group, and on 15 January a report would be

presented to the Community Safety Partnership management group. These meetings would be critical for deciding the future of Lighthouse. Forum members could assist in the process by indicating to N Atkinson what they considered to be key elements of the frontline service.

Forum members expressed strong concern about the potential closure of Lighthouse, especially given the high demand for the service. Lighthouse was a service open to all sectors of society and prior to the operation of Lighthouse there had not been a service open to men.

J Croston noted that the costs set out in the report were based on what Lighthouse considered to be necessary to provide a minimal service. If they were scaled down further, a Lighthouse-type service could not operate.

RESOLVED – That an update on the future of Lighthouse be presented at the next meeting of the Forum.

### **3.0**

#### **REVISIONS TO THE CODE OF PRACTICE**

The Forum received suggested changes to the Code of Practice, and noted that the Code of Practice had not been updated for some time.

Some Forum members expressed concern about the proposed additional point which highlighted cultural needs, as the Code of Practice already highlighted the importance of an anti-discriminatory approach, and if cultural issues were mentioned specifically, other equalities issues should also be mentioned. Alternatively, more general phrasing could highlight the importance of providing support for all access needs. Forum members also noted that if an obligation was being put on partner agencies to provide services such as interpretation, this should be made explicit.

The Forum considered the need to provide up-to-date objectives for the Forum. It was suggested that the objectives within the Code of Practice could contain more general strategic objectives, such as to protect against domestic violence, to reduce domestic violence and to inform people about domestic violence, while the action plan would set out specific statistical targets.

It was suggested that revising the Code of Practice and other documents would require a lot of discussion, and that a sub-group would be a more appropriate place to do this,

RESOLVED – That a sub-group of interested members should be set up to discuss this, and proposed changes be brought back to a future meeting of the Forum, possibly a special meeting convened for this purpose.

#### **4.0**

#### **CHANGES TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Forum received suggested changes to the Terms of Reference, and noted that the Terms of Reference had not been updated for some time.

The Chair noted that an annual membership fee had always been payable, but that this had not been enforced for some time. It was therefore proposed that the Terms of Reference should state that the fee was payable. The fee was currently £100 for statutory bodies and £10 for charitable organisations. This would also make membership of the Forum clearer, as payment of the fee would indicate membership.

It was suggested that the Terms of Reference should refer to what action should be taken if the Code of Conduct were to be breached by a member of the Forum.

The Forum noted that there had been some confusion over the submission of agenda items and this should be clarified in the Terms of Reference as well.

It was suggested that the Terms of Reference should also be discussed within the sub-group.

**RESOLVED –**

1. That the sub-group of members discuss changes to the Terms of Reference and bring proposals back to a future meeting of the Forum.
2. That agenda items should in future be submitted to the Chair and the lead officer (currently N Atkinson) two weeks before Forum meetings, and that agenda would then be distributed one week before. Late items could be accepted at the Chair's discretion.

#### **5.0**

#### **CHANGES TO THE MISSION STATEMENT**

The Forum noted that no changes to the mission statement were currently proposed. It was suggested that the mission statement should be included in the Code of Practice.

It was suggested that more consideration should be given to the Forum's role with regard to working with perpetrators to prevent domestic violence. However, it was noted that it would be difficult for Forum members to commit to referring perpetrators to appropriate programmes, as in some situations this would be inappropriate.

**RESOLVED -**

1. That the Mission Statement be included within the Code of Practice.
2. That the Chair contact representatives from a perpetrator programme in Northampton and invite them to attend a future meeting of the Forum.

## **6.0 FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS/REINSTITIGATING MANAGEMENT MEETINGS**

The Forum noted that in some situations there was a need for the Forum to be able to take decisions in-between meetings, for example in relation to Lighthouse. Alternatively, the Forum itself could meet more frequently, possibly bi-monthly. However, it was noted that more frequent meetings were likely to lead to members being unable to attend.

The Forum also noted that there was a distinction between setting up groups to discuss short-term issues, such as updating documents and the future of Lighthouse, and a permanent management group. It was suggested that the Chair and Vice-Chair could be authorised to take urgent decisions.

RESOLVED - That the sub-group of members discuss the possibility of changes to the frequency of meetings or setting up a management group and bring proposals back to a future meeting of the Forum.

## **7.0 UPDATE ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILD PROTECTION TRAINING.**

S Lloyd Morris reported that two day training courses were being held every six months, and were well-subscribed, although some professional groups were better represented than others.

The Forum noted that there were some concerns that the training course was focusing more on child protection issues and that adult domestic violence issues were starting to get overlooked. It was suggested that the Forum might need to be more proactive in ensuring that adult domestic violence issues remained on the agenda. The shift towards children's issues was possibly because the Safeguarding Children's Board was now more involved in organising the training courses, and needed to ensure that the training met their objectives.

D Butt noted that she was also a member of the Safeguarding Children's Board Training Group, and that these concerns had not been brought to their attention. She offered to raise the matter at the next Safeguarding Children's Board Training Group meeting.

RESOLVED – That D Butt pass the Forum's concerns on at the next Safeguarding Children's Board Training Group meeting.

## **8.0 NOMINATIONS FOR PRIDE**

J Croston noted that Lighthouse had been nominated for an MK Pride award, and had attended the awards evening. They had not won, but the event had been enjoyable and helped raise their public profile.

## **9.0 AWARENESS TRAINING WITHIN SCHOOLS**

I Chittenden suggested that the Forum needed to do more work within schools to raise awareness. There were representatives from

educational groups who attended Forum meetings, but a more pro-active approach was needed.

Cllr P Seymour suggested that she could arrange a meeting for I Chittenden and others with the Milton Keynes Council Cabinet Member for Children.

RESOLVED – That the Chair, I Chittenden and other interested members have a meeting with the Milton Keynes Council Cabinet Member for Children.

## **10.0 UPDATE ON SOLICITORS' EMERGENCY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ROTA**

The Forum received an update on the Emergency Domestic Violence Rota from J Pask. He noted that a review of the rota had been carried out, and it had been decided that the rota should stay as it was, covering mornings only.

It had been noted as part of the review that some members of the public appeared to misunderstand the nature of the rota. It was only for emergencies such as injunction hearings taking place that day and could not provide general advice. In addition, normal fees would be payable to solicitors on the rota, although some clients might be entitled to Legal Aid. All agencies referring clients to the rota were asked to make this clear to them. In addition, J Pask would be evaluating the rota at the start of 2007, to analyse what clients expected and see if information provided could be improved.

The Forum noted that at the meeting discussing the emergency rota, Judge Altman had expressed an interest in the Milton Keynes Forum Against Domestic Violence and had offered an alternative venue, although currently the Forum had no need of this as Milton Keynes Council was providing a room.

RESOLVED – That Judge Altman be invited to attend meetings of the Milton Keynes Forum against Domestic Violence.

## **11.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Cllr P Seymour noted that she had been invited to a Local Government Association meeting on Domestic Violence in January, aimed specifically at elected members, and she would pass any useful information on to the Forum. A similar event was being run for officers, also in January.

G Roberts noted that Relate would be organising Domestic Violence training in January, and places would be open to members of other organisations who wished to attend.

## **12.0 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Future meetings of the Forum would be held as follows:

- Wednesday 7 March 2007

- Wednesday 6 June 2007

All meetings to be held at 3.00pm at the Civic Offices, Central Milton Keynes.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 16:50 PM