

**Report of: Community Scrutiny Committee**

**To: Executive Board**

**Date: 4<sup>th</sup> February 2008**

**Item No**

**Title of Report : Domestic Violence incidents and intervention work within Oxford City.**



**Summary and Recommendations**




**Purpose of report:** To report to the Executive Board the recommendations of Community Scrutiny Committee as part of their discussions on Domestic Violence incidents and intervention work within Oxford City.

**Key decision:** No

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr Altaf –Khan

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Report Approved by:**  Andy Collett – Financial & Asset Management Services  
Jeremy Thomas – Legal & Democratic Services



**Policy Framework:**

**Recommendation(s):** The Executive Board is asked to respond to the Community Scrutiny Committee's recommendations:



1. The Executive Board ensure that the Oxfordshire Partnership make domestic violence incident monitoring and intervention work a high priority.

**1. Background**



1.1. The Community Scrutiny Committee as part of its performance monitoring of the Oxford Safer Communities Partnership, also considered the wider performance results for Thames Valley Police Authority, that were issued in October 07.



- 1.2. The Committee noted a poor rating around the local measure of sanction detection rates for Domestic Violence. A request was made for a more detailed multi-agency report looking at the figures within an Oxford City context and the underpinning issues. In addition to this the Committee requested an update on the ongoing work aimed at encouraging the reporting of Domestic Violence incidents and early intervention work. (The full report is attached at Appendix 1)
- 1.3. As can be seen from the evidence in the full report, the early intervention strategy has been effective. In Oxford there was just over a 7% increase in reported crimes between April – December on the previous year, that demonstrates an increased confidence of people in coming forward.
- 1.4. The importance of increased monitoring has been demonstrated by the work of the Emergency Departments at the John Radcliffe and Horton Hospitals. Both Departments have started to monitor alcohol related and domestic violence incidents. Over the last 6 months the departments have identified 60 cases of DV, some of which identified issues of children at risk.
- 1.5. The Committee noted that increased multi –agency monitoring has been developed through the Oxfordshire Domestic Violence Steering Group’s Strategy and the imminent ‘crosscutting’ children’s strategy.
- 1.6. The Committee thought that it was important to ensure that issues of Domestic Violence were also reflected in the target setting of the Oxfordshire Partnership.
- 1.7. It is understood that the present ‘long list’ of LLA2 targets include a measure from the national indicator set to reduce repeat incidents of Domestic Violence.
- 1.8. There is also consideration being given to broader local targets aimed at reducing violent crime incidents and measures to mitigate against impacts to children such as:

‘Increasing the number of vulnerable children and young people where domestic violence is identified as a significant factor to access support resources to promote safety and wellbeing.’

This will encourage early identification where there is concern about a child, ensure an appropriate response and help to reduce of numbers of children taken into care as a result of domestic violence (Local indicators will not feature within the Local Area Agreement although there is still scope for them to be included within the Oxfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy and The Children & Young People's / Community Safety Partnership's action plans)

1.9. To ensure that the Oxfordshire Partnership includes Domestic Violence as a priority issue the Executive Board could recommend to:

- Endorse the inclusion of the national indicator around domestic violence as a short-listed LAA target

And

- Endorse the inclusion of local indicators aimed at reducing the effects of domestic violence incidents on children & young people into the Oxfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy & the Children & Young People's / Community Safety Partnerships action plans.

## **2. Minutes of Community Scrutiny – 10th January 2008**

### **70. REPORTING OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INCIDENTS AND INTERVENTION WORK WITHIN OXFORD CITY**

The Neighbourhood Renewal Business Manager submitted a report (previously circulated and now appended). DS Mark Johns (Thames Valley Police – Domestic Abuse Unit), Liz Jones (Domestic Violence Co-ordinator), Romy Briant (Chair – Oxfordshire Domestic Violence Steering Group) and Pat Meade (Oxfordshire Women's Aid) attended to present the report and answer questions.

The following points were raised during discussion.

- The reporting of lesser crimes had increased due in part to greater confidence leading to more reporting, and as a result of early intervention the more severe crimes had decreased.
- There was good inter-agency partnership working, which gave support to victims of abuse and violence and helped them to make informed choices.
- More resources would be needed to support perpetrators and tackle the reasons for abuse.

- There was a risk assessment done in all cases to find an appropriate and safe way forward.
- For more severe cases there were arrangements in place with other local authorities to allow victims to move away from their locality to avoid the abuser, but this could take the victim away from the support of family and friends and be unsettling for children's education.
- Although the majority of victims of domestic violence were women it was recognised that men were also victims, and it was perhaps even harder for them to seek help.
- In cases where there was little chance of a successful prosecution, perhaps due to the victim's unwillingness to testify, lack of visible injuries or lack of independent witnesses, cautions were given. DS John told the Committee that these could be effective.
- Oxford City Homes tenancy agreements included sanctions against perpetrators of violence and they could be evicted for breach of tenancy – in such cases the tenancy would be transferred to the victim.
- Oxfordshire Women's Aid was the first point of contact for people seeking help. Contact details were on their website – telephone 01865 784000

Resolved to: -

- (1) Thank participants for their attendance and for their valuable work in this field;
- (2) The Executive Board ensure that the Oxfordshire Partnership make domestic violence incident monitoring and intervention work a high priority.

### **3. Comments from Portfolio Holder (Cllr Altaf - Khan)**

None received

**Contact :** Julia Woodman, Scrutiny Officer

**Tel:** 252318 **E Mail :** [jwoodman@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:jwoodman@oxford.gov.uk)

**Background papers:** None

**Report of:** Strategy & Review Business Unit

**To:** Community Scrutiny Committee

**Date:** 10th January 2008

**Item No:**

**Title of Report :** Reporting of domestic violence incidents and early intervention work within Oxford City



### Summary and Recommendations



**Purpose of report:** To update the committee on the multi-agency work within City targeted towards early intervention, the encouragement of reporting and current figures for offences / sanction detection rates.

**Key decision:** N/A

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Altaf-Khan

**Ward(s) affected:** All



#### Report Approved by

**Legal:** Clive Thomas (Legal & Democratic services)

**Finance:** Andy Collett (Financial and Asset Management)



**Policy Framework:** N/A



#### Recommendation(s):



1. To note the report and make recommendations as necessary



## **Background**

1. At the Community Scrutiny meeting in October the Committee considered the performance figures for the Oxford Safer Communities Partnership. The meeting coincided with the publication of the Thames Valley Performance Assessment. The Committee noted that the Thames Valley sanction detection rates for domestic violence were reported as poor. The Committee wanted to know whether this was replicated at an Oxford level and wanted to get behind the headline statistics to look at the underpinning issues.
2. This report outlines the response to this request written by the Domestic Violence Co-ordinator, Chair of Oxfordshire Domestic Violence Steering Group and the Cowley Domestic Violence Detective Sergeant for the Thames Valley Police

## **Introduction**

3. The Oxfordshire Domestic Violence Steering Group (ODVSG) has written a three-year strategy with the main aim “to reduce the frequency and consequences of domestic abuse and increase safety and options for all of those affected.” Oxford has played a key role with other partners in developing a multi agency partnership and strategy to reduce the risk of domestic abuse, which meets, and in some respects had anticipated the national good practice guidelines (e.g. the community response model) and contains pioneering elements. The strategy is endorsed by the Home Office and is in the LGA library of innovation and LAA good practice. ODVSG are currently developing a 'cross cutting' children's strategy which is identified as a priority in this current year CYPP and endorsed by the Safeguarding Board as a breakthrough.
4. To really have any impact on the prevalence and effect of domestic abuse it is imperative that victims feel confident to report early before they are physically injured or once the violence starts. The increase in reporting or the level of violence when they report will have an impact on the type of crimes or incidents reported. The lower level crimes are harder to 'detect' due to lack of evidence. This early intervention strategy has been taken up by a number of agencies with excellent results.

## **Early Intervention Work in Oxford City**

5. Unique to Oxfordshire is a network of Domestic Abuse Champions. There are approximately 200 frontline practitioners across the county who are from a wide variety of agencies, including housing, health visitors and Children Centres. There are currently 62 Champions in Oxford City, and more undergoing training. The Champions receive the same standard of training and are skilled in recognising domestic abuse and level of risk amongst their clients and know how to respond. As a result of their good work more victims are being identified and supported earlier. This in turn increases their confidence to report at an earlier stage before the abuse escalates.
  
6. It is now mandatory for midwives to ask their clients if they are in an abusive relationship. Often when asked in this way women will disclose more readily. Once they have disclosed then appropriate safety and support mechanisms can be put in place. Without being asked most women will continue to suffer in silence until they reach crisis point. The Maternity Department at the John Radcliffe have a number of Champions who are able to support their colleagues when dealing with a victim of domestic abuse.
  
7. The Emergency Department at the John Radcliffe have a named nurse, Clare Mylam. who as well as monitoring those who are needing treatment for alcohol related incidents is also monitoring domestic violence incidents. Over the last 6 months she has identified 60 cases of DV jointly from the Horton and John Radcliffe. All of these cases have been referred to midwives, GPs, and health visitors, a few of them have identified children at risk and GP practices have put plans into action. Clare increased the triage category for assault victims through clinical governance meetings as she identified that victims tend to self-discharge if not seen within one hour. In addition Clare has put victim packs together in blank envelopes, which the staff give directly to patient or can post to a specified address. The Emergency Department has also linked with the Maternity Department on domestic abuse cases.

## **Support for Victims in Oxford**

8. Oxfordshire Women's Aid plays an essential role in supporting women and children who are or have been in an abusive relationship. They have an outreach worker and a children's worker in Oxford. A support group was set up for women in Oxford; this was supported by the Oxford City Council

DV co-ordinator. The children's worker is also conducting excellent work with the children and their parent.

9. The Specialist Domestic Violence Court (SDVC) in Oxford gives a strong message that domestic abuse will not be tolerated and will be dealt with efficiently by the Criminal Justice System. This in turn raises the confidence of people to come forward and report to the Police. The SDVC has been live since April 2007. The Magistrates, Prosecutors, staff and Court Clerks have all had domestic violence awareness training and therefore have a deeper understanding of its complexities.
10. A new Independent Domestic Violence Advisory Service, Reducing the Risk, is being developed in Oxford to support high-risk victims and their children. This service will support the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) that provides safety management for victims who are in imminent danger of serious harm or death. This service will be going live in the New Year. Oxfordshire Women's Aid and Reducing the Risk will be working very closely together to support victims of domestic abuse and their children.

### **Domestic Abuse Crime**

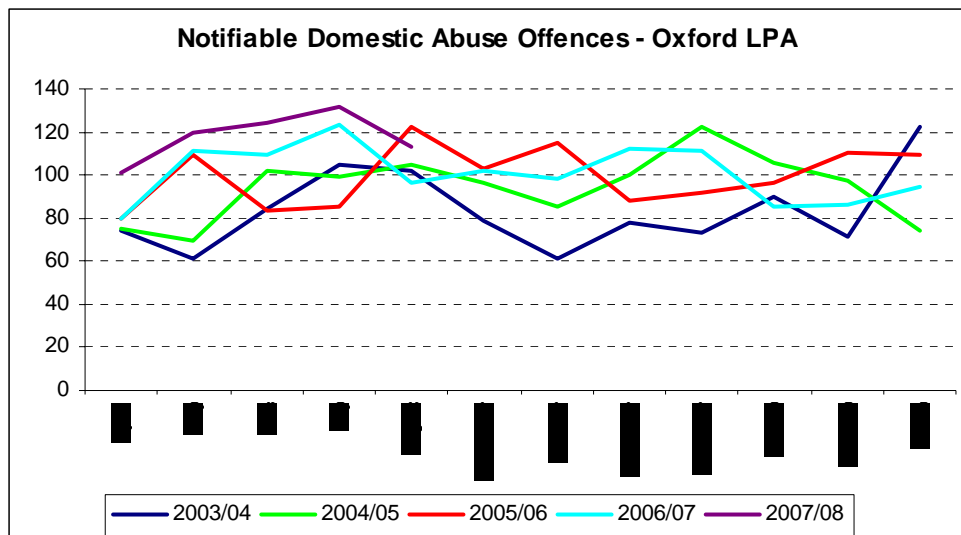
11. The official definition for sanction detection is as follows: A sanctioned detection occurs when (1) a notifiable offence (crime) has been committed and recorded; (2) a suspect has been identified and is aware of the detection; (3) the CPS evidential test is satisfied; (4) the victim has been informed that the offence has been detected, and; (5) the suspect has been charged, reported for summons, or cautioned, been issued with a penalty notice for disorder or the offence has been taken into consideration when an offender is sentenced. (*Fixed penalty notices are not issued for domestic violence cases.*)
12. Sanction detections in Oxfordshire on paper have made significant progress towards meeting the three-year target - in practice it is difficult to sustain the direction of travel because:
  - the approach to sanction detections in high and medium risk cases has worked well and any further gains to be made while very important to those involved are relatively numerically small
  - the early intervention strategy has been successful to such an extent that the number of reported incidents continues to increase (significantly beyond the LAA target) but a far greater proportion of reported incidents are low risk and these present different and difficult challenges for response officers. Inspector Michael Lynch is again pioneering a strategy here with the full support of the Oxfordshire BCU.



13. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 until 4<sup>th</sup> December 2007 Oxford city had 875 domestic crimes. This is a 7.2% increase in crime on the previous year. The detection rate for this period is currently 41.4% against that of 41.9% from 2006/07. It should be noted that although the percentage has dropped, TVP have detected a greater number of actual crime than the previous year. These figures are shown in greater detail in Annex A

14. The increase of crime from 816 (06/07) to 875 (07/08) is a reflection of public confidence and the associated increase in the reporting of domestic abuse.

15. The following chart shows the long-term trend for the first half of this year, against previous years. This clearly shows that there has been a steady increase in reported crime year on year.

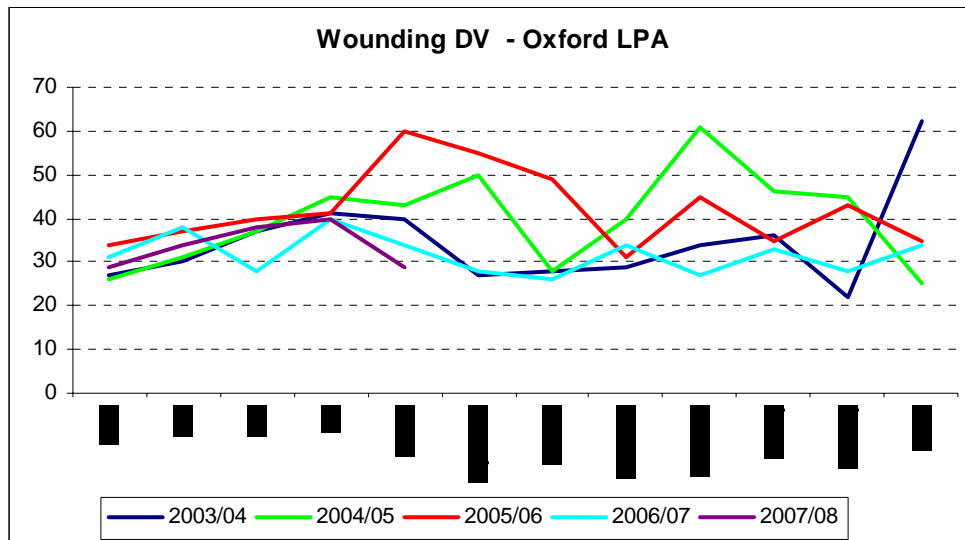


### Crime types

16. 'Wounding' (ABH and GBH) and 'Common Assault' are the two main crime classifications in relation to Domestic Abuse.

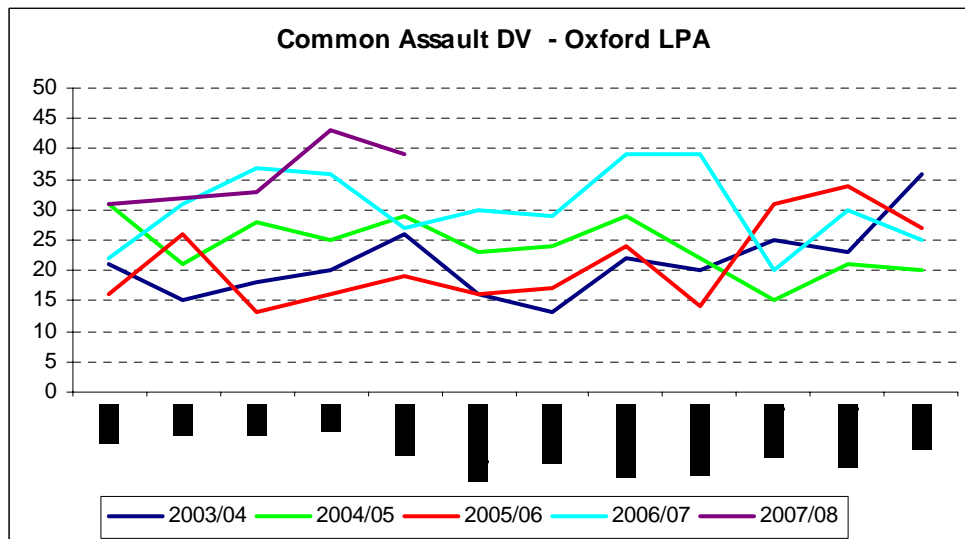
17. The following chart shows that offences of 'Wounding' have fallen in the first half of 2007 compared to earlier years.

## Wounding



## Common Assault

18. The following chart shows that Common assault, over the same period, have increased against earlier years.



## Conclusion

19. Due to the effectiveness of the early intervention strategy the volume of domestic abuse crime is steadily rising. This is an indicator that there has been an increase in public confidence leading to greater reporting, in support of the LAA stretch Target. Offences of 'wounding' have dropped against an increase of 'common assaults'. This should be seen as a positive outcome as it shows that the increase in reported crime is of lower level assaults rather than more serious assaults.
20. This increase in common assaults have impacted in the overall sanctioned detection performance figure, because low-level assaults are normally harder to 'detect' due to the lack of supporting evidence.
21. The long-term trend is positive with increased reporting and an increase in the number of detected offences, against the reduction in more serious assaults.

## Recommendation(s):

22. To note the report and make any recommendations as necessary

**Report Authors: Liz Jones (Domestic Violence Co-ordinator – Oxford City Council), DS Mark Johns (Domestic Abuse Unit Cowley Police Station, mes valley Police) & Romy Briant – (Chair – Oxfordshire Domestic Violence Steering Group)**

**Background papers: none**





### Annex a

**Finally Recorded Offences of Domestic Abuse in Thames Valley input or cleared up with a Sanction Detection  
between 1st April 2006 - 4th December 2006 and between 1st April 2007 - 4th December 2007**

		Recorded Crime				Sanction Detections		Sanction Detection Rate	
		2006/07	2007/08	Change	Percentage Change	2006/07	2007/08	2006/07	2007/08
<b>Berkshire East</b>	Bracknell Forest	477	409	-68	-14.3%	221	166	46.3%	40.6%
	Slough	923	950	27	2.9%	418	367	45.3%	38.6%
	Windsor and Maidenhead	490	464	-26	-5.3%	210	187	42.9%	40.3%
	<b>BCU Total</b>	<b>1,890</b>	<b>1,823</b>	<b>-67</b>	<b>-3.5%</b>	<b>849</b>	<b>720</b>	<b>44.9%</b>	<b>39.5%</b>
<b>Berkshire West</b>	Reading	1,013	1,141	128	12.6%	453	414	44.7%	36.3%
	West Berkshire	599	570	-29	-4.8%	295	285	49.2%	50.0%
	Wokingham	423	386	-37	-8.7%	207	145	48.9%	37.6%
	<b>BCU Total</b>	<b>2,035</b>	<b>2,097</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	<b>955</b>	<b>844</b>	<b>46.9%</b>	<b>40.2%</b>
<b>Buckinghamshire</b>	Aylesbury Vale	677	648	-29	-4.3%	292	291	43.1%	44.9%
	Chiltern	297	278	-19	-6.4%	144	113	48.5%	40.6%
	South Buckinghamshire	248	232	-16	-6.5%	102	81	41.1%	34.9%
	Wycombe	743	746	3	0.4%	358	279	48.2%	37.4%
	<b>BCU Total</b>	<b>1,965</b>	<b>1,904</b>	<b>-61</b>	<b>-3.1%</b>	<b>896</b>	<b>764</b>	<b>45.6%</b>	<b>40.1%</b>
<b>Milton Keynes</b>	<b>BCU Total</b>	<b>1,306</b>	<b>1,451</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>11.1%</b>	<b>554</b>	<b>625</b>	<b>42.4%</b>	<b>43.1%</b>
<b>Oxfordshire</b>	Cherwell	607	611	4	0.7%	274	240	45.1%	39.3%
	Oxford	816	875	59	7.2%	342	362	41.9%	41.4%
	South Oxfordshire	363	337	-26	-7.2%	180	155	49.6%	46.0%
	Vale of White Horse	324	366	42	13.0%	175	172	54.0%	47.0%
	West Oxfordshire	299	298	-1	-0.3%	139	132	46.5%	44.3%
	<b>BCU Total</b>	<b>2,409</b>	<b>2,487</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>3.2%</b>	<b>1,110</b>	<b>1,061</b>	<b>46.1%</b>	<b>42.7%</b>
<b>Thames Valley</b>		<b>9,605</b>	<b>9,762</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>4,364</b>	<b>4,014</b>	<b>45.4%</b>	<b>41.1%</b>

