

December 2010, *Edition 4*

Message from the Chief Executive

As a friend of Standing Together I wanted to thank you for being a supporter of our work. I also wanted to describe how we are faring in such a difficult financial climate. The past year has seen us having much success, as you can see from this and other newsletters. We are relatively secure for this financial year because of our prudent approach to our finances and because we have managed to generate income from a broad spectrum of sources.

Next year, especially if one ever reads a newspaper or watches the news, is likely to be very daunting. Partly the problem lies in the fact that domestic violence is still not recognised as a fundamental determinant of social wellbeing. This means it is not mainstreamed as a role in a way that insists agencies in the statutory sector commit funds and activities towards the issue. Often Children's Services and Health play a peripheral part in these partnerships for example. We are also unclear about the policies of the new coalition Government on domestic violence and related issues.

If domestic violence is on the margins of the core activities of Local Authorities and Health it will be much easier to slice those budgets dedicated to this issue. Only time will tell, but we feel that a modern and effective approach to domestic violence is just beginning to be embedded in the way partnerships work, and any change now may significantly harm that progress. This of course means that those victims and children who are safer, and those perpetrators who have been held to account, will not be the signal for the change of culture in our society that we have been seeking. We will continue to witness the tragedy of families suffering awfully at the hands of the abuser and the long term effects this has on all those involved.

Anything you can do to ensure this does not happen, perhaps only in small ways, may make all the difference.

With best wishes.

Anthony Wills
Chief Executive

2010 Domestic Violence Conference

The Domestic Violence Partnership continues to move from strength to strength. On the 29th October over 100 professionals attended the third **Domestic Violence Partnership Conference** hosted at Hammersmith Hospital W12 Conference Centre. We received excellent feedback from participants; in particular the excellent venue, the breadth of the partnership work and the quality of speakers.

Our key note speaker Frank Mullane from charity 'Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse' (AAFDA), gave a powerful and personal account of the importance of recognising the signs and risks relating to domestic violence. The charity AAFDA aims to help families directly who have suffered such tragedies and Frank continues to work nationally and internationally to raise awareness - www.aafda.org.uk

As part of our conference evaluation, we teamed up with independent film production company Gelder Berry Productions to create a 3 minute promotional film. We are just awaiting approval of the final edit before we can circulate to our networks but this is sure to be a handy marketing tool for both The Partnership and Standing Together. Thanks to Gelder Berry Productions for their expertise and LBHF Safer Communities Division for providing funding.

Plans for next year's conference are already in motion and the date is set for 21st October 2011, would be lovely to see you there!

Domestic Violence Coordinators Network (DVCN)

The DVCN hosted their 3rd conference on the 2nd December, at Friends House, Euston – **‘Because you’re worth it: How to survive in challenging times’**. The weather tried, but failed, to prevent this training session from going ahead. DVCs from as far afield as Devon, Birmingham, Liverpool and Cheshire battled the conditions and the trains to arrive in London for this crucial day of reflection on the future of the DVC.

The day followed the publication of the Coalition Government’s strategic narrative about Violence Against Women and Girls and the first speaker, Claire Gipson, from the Home Office, had the task of outlining the Government’s plans. Clearly, with the detail of the supporting actions to be produced in the Spring, there is more work to be done but Claire was able to provide much needed reassurance that the Home Secretary was indeed committed to these issues.

The funding connected to the narrative (£28M over 4 years which was announced on 25th November) will mainly support direct services and will be provided on a stable basis over the four year period to provide more security to the sector. The Home Office announcement of funding for this work is one of the first that has been made in this difficult economic climate and the DVCN have been asked by the Home Office to help ensure that the funding is apportioned in the most effective and logical way. The DVCN is also writing to the Home Secretary to thank her for her support for DV and VAWG issues and to make the case for the continuation and importance of the DVC role. This letter will be made available to all DVCs to copy to their local MPs to make the case in the localities.

New Health and Maternity Post

Standing Together has successfully raised nearly a quarter of a million pounds to benefit pregnant women and their unborn babies put at risk by abuse in homes across West London. A Big Lottery grant will enable us to carry out a domestic violence, health and maternity project in partnership with Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust over a five year period.

The project will provide support to pregnant women experiencing domestic abuse. In addition, the project will consult with staff and patients; continue to train midwives and maternity staff, and ensure safe referral routes for women from the West London Boroughs served by that maternity service. Pregnancy can be a time of danger for many women and their babies, and abusers isolate them from sources of support. Maternity services are used by all pregnant women so are ideally placed to offer early intervention and advice. Midwives at Queen Charlotte’s and Chelsea Hospital sampled 130 files of vulnerable cases and 1 in 3 had been identified as suffering domestic violence, without routine screening. Screening is expected to identify and offer help to many more women.

Jessica Donnallan will be joining the team on the 5th January as our new Health and Maternity Project Coordinator, and will no doubt update you on her work in the next edition of the newsletter.

Fundraising

The Standing Together team have raised enough to cover our existing costs until 31/03/2011, which is a very good position for a 3rd Sector organisation to be in the current economic climate. The full annual report and accounts to 31/03/2010 are being audited now and if any Friend would like a full copy we would be happy to send one to you.

Staff Cuts

Standing Together is meeting the challenge of the coming year by cutting the money spent on its senior management posts in order to retain its important operational staff. Anthony Wills, Chief Executive and Beryl Foster, Operations Manager will both reduce their hours so that the priority work of project coordinators and services can be continued. This means that survivors of domestic violence will continue to benefit from their work.

Staff welcomed this approach at their ‘Away Day’ in October and felt that this showed the ethos of the voluntary sector at its best and in stark contrast to the ethics of too many of the large corporations.

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