

Dear Friend of Standing Together,

Welcome to the second edition of our newsletter. It feels to us as though the world has moved on yet again although some of the headlines in newspapers recently may belie that confidence. The Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy has just been released and this reminds us all how abuse disproportionately affects women. It is a great piece of work and we hope its existence will support a greater focus on these issues. Our concern would be that insufficient funding to develop the essential elements of this strategy will not be readily available in this difficult financial climate.

We are also looking forward to the launch of the national DVCN (Domestic Violence Coordinators Network) in December. These people are the unsung heroes of the domestic violence sector and such a network is way overdue.

Finally our local efforts are proving successful. We have just had a great conference and our partnership with Health is proving ever more productive alongside the existing structures which have done so much to keep victims safe and perpetrators accountable.

I hope this festive time of year brings you much peace and enjoyment.

With very best wishes.

Anthony Wills  
Chief Executive, Standing Together

## Domestic Violence Coordinators Network (DVCN)

Great news, all the hard work that Standing Together have been doing since the largest conference of Domestic Violence Coordinators in 2008, has paid off and the **Domestic Violence Coordinators Network** is here! The Network is designed to support those people who work to make domestic violence partnerships more effective. The role of the domestic violence coordinator (DVC) is crucial and, up until now, has lacked a supportive framework helping them to achieve their objectives. The intention of the network is to provide networking opportunities for DVCs across the country, tangible support and a method of influencing local and national policy. It will be focused particularly around its website, which has been designed by DVCs for DVCs, and includes event, training and employment news as well as a discussion forum - [www.dvcn.org.uk](http://www.dvcn.org.uk).

The network and website were officially launched in London on the 15<sup>th</sup> December, with other 50 DVC's in attendance. Headlining the day was **Sylvia Walby**, the person who has almost single handedly given us the grounds for demanding more from our partners, who shared her latest thoughts. Following on from feedback from DVCs themselves, the main focus of the day was on writing a business case, with speakers from both the voluntary and corporate sectors.

# Violence Against Women and Girls

The disproportionate impact of violence against women and girls has been recognised by Government and has led to a new strategy. This can be found at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/about-us/news/violence-against-women-and-girls> . We fully support the intentions of this work but worry that insufficient funding has been dedicated to delivering better and new approaches. This broadening of the agenda is absolutely right in principle – the data is very convincing – but we worry that extra work will be expected of hard-pressed domestic violence coordinators and that some people may even feel that domestic violence is a task that has been completed if it does not remain specifically prioritised. It is our job to make sure this does not happen and the whole strategy is a success.

## Consultancy

### Reaching out beyond Hammersmith and Fulham

One of Standing Together's aims is to do everything it can to support domestic violence partnerships across the UK. (In fact we have also helped such partnerships in Canada and Italy this year!). Despite our relatively small size we have criss-crossed the country and worked with a variety of organisations committed to improving the response to this issue. Some of this work has been directly related to the system of Specialist Domestic Violence Courts around the country as this a specific area of expertise for us having been involved with Government policy on their development and implementation for some years. Of course we also coordinate our own SDVC in West London which gives us an additional operational insight.

In a more general sense we offer our consultancy services to domestic violence partnerships to support the process of development and improvement. Some interesting themes appear from this work which seem to be typical, whatever the location:

- Domestic violence is gradually creeping up the list of priorities for local statutory sector agencies
- Specialist services are still under-funded if related to demand
- Outcomes (always highly prized!) are often difficult to define meaning agencies tend to shy away from initiatives. E.g. In terms of safety for victims or the long term benefit for children being taught about healthy relationships.
- Effective partnerships are often based around passionate and skilled individuals rather than a logical strategic and operational structure.

We will continue to deliver these services to partnerships, partly to generate income but mainly as a means of ensuring that agencies work well internally but also across the piece with other organisations that can, together, make a real difference to victims, children and perpetrators.

# 2009 Domestic Violence Conference

**The Annual Domestic Violence Conference 2009** – took place on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> November to a packed Town Hall of over 100 delegates from a wide range of agencies and services in the borough.

- James Reilly Director of Community Services introduced the conference acknowledging partners hard work and urging delegates to continue to work together to address domestic violence.
- Matthew Tucker, Higher Analyst Metropolitan Police presented a detailed report on domestic violence crime in the borough. (*Please see attached summary*)
- The chairs of each Operational Group gave an update on achievements over the last year and highlighted areas for ongoing action: Specialist Services, the Court, MARAC, Housing, Children and Health.
- A key component of our collective success is having survivor centred services that respond effectively to risk. After showing the award winning film 'Leaving' produced by Social Film Drama [http://www.glennie.com/whats\\_new/article.php?newsitem\\_id=86](http://www.glennie.com/whats_new/article.php?newsitem_id=86) Amrita Das Gupta Manager of ADVANCE Advocacy Project gave some insights into the barriers and risks for survivors attempting to leave violent partners.
- Anthony Wills chaired the conference and just before lunch break asked delegates to help identify priority actions and ways of measuring our partnership success so we can set some realistic goals for our programme of work 2010 – 2011 and continue to build on achievements to date.

Thank you to everyone who attended and participated in the conference. Look forward to seeing you next year.

## Training

### Training carried out by Standing Together since April 2009

The training programme we offer is growing from strength to strength. Not only has a 3-year domestic violence Training Strategy for the whole borough now been agreed and put in place, but the courses we are able to offer have been taken up by an increasingly wide range of organisations. We have added a more advanced skills course for practitioners and managers on risk assessment and safety planning, and it has proved very popular. The Foundation level multi agency Dynamics of Domestic Violence and Best Practice courses continue to be oversubscribed and generates a great deal of lively discussion!

***I thought the trainers were very informative, knowledgeable and thoughtful. One of the best one-day trainings I have done***

The Local Safeguarding Children Board has commissioned more courses from Standing Together this year, and there has been discussion about the possibility of these becoming mandatory core courses for every agency. On each course, when we ask "what proportion of your work involves domestic violence situations?", agencies' responses highlight an increasing awareness of domestic violence as the context for many presenting issues for families, vulnerable adults and crimes.

In the past 6 months we have also run two more domestic violence courses for community Interpreters, and have worked closely with the local Refugee Forum and black and minority ethnic organisations to provide training to support first steps in help seeking by their members.

# MARAC

The Hammersmith & Fulham and Kensington & Chelsea MARACs (Multi-Agency-Risk-Assessment-Conferences) are going from strength to strength. As we near the end of their second year it looks likely that the number of referrals to the MARACs has doubled in 2009 from 2008. The increase in both referral levels and the number of different agencies referring indicate an increase in local staff awareness of the MARAC and how to refer to it. The MARAC membership has been extended to include the Youth Offending Team and in Hammersmith & Fulham the Teenage Pregnancy Partnership. By extending the Membership to include more Youth Services we hope to increase the MARAC's ability to reduce risk to domestic violence victims/survivors in the 16-17 age bracket. Now that the two MARACs are successfully embedded Standing Together will be monitoring and improving upon the MARAC process to increase the safety of high risk domestic violence victims/survivors in these Boroughs.

## Fundraising

### 112—2010

Following on from the fantastic success of the 2009 112 bike ride, which raised over £10,000, Standing Together is once again taking to their bicycles. Once again colleagues and friends will ride 112 miles - a mile for each victim murdered by their partner every year on average in the UK. It will take place on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 2010 and we are increasing our numbers to a maximum of 50. Why don't you have a go? More details are available on our website:

[www.standingtogether.org.uk](http://www.standingtogether.org.uk). If you are a little nervous about riding that far in one day there are ways of participating without doing the whole distance (some of our friends only did 20 miles so we seek novices through to serious pedallers!). We hope that with your help we will beat the £11K we raised last year and if you don't fancy being saddle sore why don't you support a colleague who does? Keep your eyes open for sponsorship forms and publicity.

If you need more information please contact Laura at Standing Together:

[admin@standingtogether.org.uk](mailto:admin@standingtogether.org.uk)

### The Survivors Cookbook

In an attempt to achieve three things, Standing Together is intending to publish the "Survivors Cookbook". We want to raise awareness and funds to support action to combat domestic violence, and give survivors and those who work with them an opportunity to share their favourite recipes in a good cause. We would love to know which meals have had an impact in the lives of people who have suffered from domestic abuse; but we also welcome entries from those who work with survivors. Our intention is also to seek recipes from professional chefs and intersperse those with the ones we get from the front line. Hopefully we will get the cookery book professionally published and it will attract lots of publicity. All profits made will be shared equally between the National Domestic Violence Coordinators Network and the No Recourse Fund, administered by Women's Aid. If you want to take part in this uplifting and fun exercise please email your recipe to

[m.wills@standingtogether.org.uk](mailto:m.wills@standingtogether.org.uk). Let us know if you wish to be named and, if you would like to, let us have a few words about why the recipe is important to you. Let all your colleagues know as we are trying to spread our net widely.

### The Metropolitan Police

We are very grateful to the Metropolitan police students who have chosen Standing Together to fundraise for this year. Over 120 students will be taking part in a range of money raising activities from climbing the 3 peaks, to sponsored to walks to class room fines! We wish them all the best with their efforts.

# The Standing Together Team

Our staff team:

- Anthony Wills - Chief Executive
- Beryl Foster – Operations Manager
- Peta Sissons – Training and Information Officer
- Tanya Allen – Data, Research and Tracking Officer
- Briony Redman – MARAC Co-ordinator
- Laura Burtenshaw – Office Manager and MARAC Administrator
- Shasca Foster – Finance, Administration and Data Input
- Jenny Bowes – Projects Officer

Also two new members of staff joined our team during 2009, they are:

## **Cath Kane - Partnership Manager**

Cath Kane has worked in the Violence Against Women sector for over 10 years, in a range of settings in both the statutory and voluntary sectors and developed numerous projects. Cath has been responsible for the development and implementation of domestic violence strategies, policies and protocols across local authority departments and partnership projects. In Brent this work included a Specialist Domestic Violence Court, MARAC and IDVA Service and produced two film projects highlighting survivors perspectives and effective interventions. More recently in Islington Cath worked with the partners to implement a number of key projects.

## **Rebecca Vagi – Domestic Violence and Housing Coordinator**

Rebecca is a psychology graduate from the University of Manitoba. She has worked in a myriad of settings within the field of Child & Youth Work as a front line worker, crisis worker & programme manager. Rebecca additionally worked as a sexual assault crisis worker at a local clinic and as a research assistant with a women's resource centre. In London, she has worked as a supported housing worker and briefly as a deputy manager with a floating support service. Over the last year, she has worked as a domestic violence housing advocate with ADVANCE in a unique post where she was based with the H&F housing options & advice team and has supported over 100 survivors who have approached the Council as homeless as a result of domestic violence.

[www.standingtogether.org.uk](http://www.standingtogether.org.uk)

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