

Sexual Violence and Abuse

Objective: To prevent sexual violence and abuse, improve acute and ongoing victim care and criminal justice responses

Definition - Central Government confirms the definition as:

- *Sexual violence and abuse which occurs in a domestic setting (includes forced marriage, female genital mutilation and honour killings).*
- *Rape and sexual assault which occurs in a public place or non-domestic setting*
- *Sexual exploitation*

Why is this priority?

Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships have been advised that tackling sexual violence is a government priority as set out within the following:

- > Cutting Crime: A New Partnership 2008-11
- > Tackling Sexual Violence: Guidance for Local Partnerships, June 2006
- > Cross Government Action Plan on Sexual Violence and Abuse, April 2007
- > Saving Lives. Reducing Harm. Protecting the Public. Action Plan for Tackling Violence, 2008-11
- > Developing Domestic Violence Strategies: A Guide for Partnerships, 2004
- > Local Area and Public Service Agreements, including Reward Element Guidance
- > Gender Equality Duty, 2007

In summary, the government is seeking to prioritise those crimes which cause the most harm to individuals in society. In relation to sexual violence we are advised that CDRPs have a crucial role to play in the prevention of these serious crimes in providing services to victims and in bringing perpetrators to justice.

Findings from the strategic assessment

Sexual violence and abuse have a devastating impact on victims, their families and friends and wider society. Its impact is likely to affect mental, physical and sexual health. The severity of the impact is reflected in the high cost to the victims and to society. Home Office research published in 2005 estimated that the total cost of sexual offences committed in England & Wales in 2003-04 was nearly £8.5 billion.

The government's guidance confirms that sexual violence and abuse in adulthood are massively under-reported by both male and female victims. The 2001 British Crime Survey Inter-Personal Violence Model found that only 15% of rapes came to

the attention of the police and that 40% of those who had suffered had told no-one about it. Over half had suffered sexual violence perpetrated by a current or former partner. National information confirms that 98% of offenders are male and 82% of victims are female. As expected, those percentages are consistently closely reflected in local data for Sussex for both rape and other serious sexual offences. Women have a greater fear of rape than any other crime.

Nationally, it is well recognised that conviction rates for sexual offences are too low, however it should also be recognised that they are at their highest level seen for 10 years.

Nationally and locally, there is a strong correlation between alcohol and sexual violence. Research indicates that in a significant proportion of rape and sexual assault cases, the victim consumed alcohol prior to the assault. There may be a number of reasons for this association, one of those being that women may be specifically targeted by perpetrators because they are drunk, more vulnerable as a result and less likely to remember details of the attack. The most common age group for victims is 20 years of age and under. Research also indicates that many perpetrators have drunk alcohol immediately prior to the incident or have ongoing alcohol misuse problems.

In Brighton & Hove, the local Strategic Assessment confirmed that there were 1297 serious sexual offence between April 2004 and March 2009 which is the highest number of offences pro rata to the population compared with other Authorities within Sussex. The Sussex Sexual Assault Referral Centre opened in September 2008 and between this date and June 2009 there have been 230 victims of serious sexual offence dealt with at the centre of which 95% of victims were women. 30% (of the 230 total referrals) of those were from Brighton & Hove.

Sex workers are amongst those groups who are a higher risk of being a victim of sexual violence and of being less likely to report incidents. Brighton & Hove does not have 'on street' prostitution activity. However, there are a significant number of prostitutes working from sex parlours and within an 'indoor' sex market. A local survey revealed that of those surveyed in the city, 57.5% of sex workers reported that they had experienced violence or abuse and, of those, only 12.5% had reported those incidents to the police.

Childhood sexual abuse and that experienced by young people is also included within the definition. The Local Safeguarding Children Board commissioned and received a report (2007) on the findings of a 'Joint agency audit into the incidence, recording and outcomes of child sexual abuse investigations in Brighton & Hove'. Its purpose was to ensure that sufficient safeguards are in place to protect children and to ensure that joint working mandated by the Board is effective and efficient. The review looked at ways that child sexual abuse is reported and recorded, the care pathways that are followed and processes of investigation, case management and support. The recommendations which come from the review of 38 cases are helping to inform good practice changes within the health, social care and police sectors.

Research and a report undertaken by Barnardo's (September 2007) and supported by the Children and Young People's Trust has also assisted in providing important information. The 'Pan Sussex study of Young People

Main Partners

Sussex Police
Force Rape and Serious Sexual Assault Steering Group
Local Safeguarding Children Board
'Staying Safe' Group & Children and Young People's Trust
Adult Protection Board
Women's Services Strategic Network
Women's Centre: RISE: Survivors Network: Oasis
Sex Workers Strategy Group
Senior Officer Strategy Group for Domestic Violence
Alcohol Strategy Group

at Risk of Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking' audited 33 case studies from Brighton & Hove (as well as 10 from East and West Sussex). The findings identify reasons and evidence of the underlying causes as to why and how young people are drawn into sexual activity, including the exchange of sexual acts for money, drugs, a bed for the night/accommodation and so on. There is a strong correlation with their living circumstances and their vulnerability to sexual exploitation and with alcohol and drug abuse. The recommendations for action include those to identify and reduce risks as well as interventions to protect young people. In addition the aim is to address the invisibility for sexual exploitation of young people.

Current status of work

Brighton & Hove's CDRP has recognised the high priority that is being given to this work by government and that there compliance with gender equality duties is also required. The CDRP also recognises the cross-cutting nature of the work and that sexual violence can occur in a range of different contexts and circumstances. We plan therefore that actions to combat sexual violence are integrated within action plans and work programmes which are dealing with:

- > Domestic violence
- > Alcohol related violence
- > Violent crime
- > Prostitution & trafficking
- > Safeguarding children
- > Adult protection
- > Fear of crime
- > Gender equality duty
- > Public protection and the management of offenders

Where next?

Brighton & Hove CDRP works within the Force wide Rape and Serious Sexual Assault Steering Group, participating in the development of the Sexual Assault Referral Centre as well as developing interventions which aim to prevent and reduce the risks to young people and adults. Our work will also be informed by the findings of research, the aims of which include identifying the factors that influence reporting and increase our understanding as to why attrition rates are so high. The research (carried out by Sussex and Glasgow Universities) is expected to report in July and October 2010.

In the meantime, we continue to develop local good practice responses for Brighton & Hove ensuring they are co-ordinated with Force wide developments. Developing local services to ensure women and men receive specialist support within Brighton & Hove is a high priority. We recognise that sexual violence is best tackled through a multi-agency approach therefore we are working in partnership recognising the expertise of both the independent and statutory sector agencies as well as supporting the role of specialist voluntary sector services. Implications for sustainability

Preventing sexual violence is also central to meeting targets in relation to public health in communities, the health and wellbeing of individuals and their families and safeguarding children and young people. Women are most likely to be victims of sexual violence and those who are most excluded are more likely to be at risk, therefore preventing and reducing its incidence, is central to the delivery of the Inclusive Council Policy and of the Gender Equality duties.

Parallel plans

- Sussex Police Rape, Sexual Violence and Serious Sexual Offences Strategy and findings of Strategic Assessments
- Brighton & Hove Alcohol Strategy
- Recommendations of 'Tipping The Iceberg' Study of Young People at risk of Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking (Barnardo's: Sept. 2007)
- Sex Workers Strategy
- Recommendations of report to Local Safeguarding Board on Inter-Agency Audit of Sexual Abuse Investigations in Brighton & Hove (March 2008)
- Domestic Violence Strategy
- Strategy and Action Plans of 'Staying Safe' Subgroup and Children and Young People's Trust
- Gender Equality Actions Plans

Performance Indicators

- NI 26: Specialist support to victims of a serious

Sexual Violence, Abuse and Exploitation, Prostitution and Trafficking Action Plan

Outcome Sought 1

Achieve an understanding of the nature and prevalence of sexual violence in Brighton & Hove and of actions that will decrease attrition rates

Actions

1.1 Continue to identify the nature and prevalence of sexual violence in Brighton & Hove, recognising the wide variety of contexts in which it can take place and the different profiles and circumstances of victims and offenders. A summary report and baselines for the CDRP to be prepared based on the Strategic Assessments of Sussex Police and the findings of research (to be completed by Sussex and Glasgow Caledonian Universities in 2010).

1.2 Each Strategy and Working Group to gather information about the nature and prevalence of sexual violence within the domain of their strategy,

1.3 Consider the practicalities of establishing a multi-agency data capture system that includes information from local voluntary agencies as well as police, sexual health and other appropriate services.

1.4. Introduce IT solutions which would enable extraction of information when a victim is 'Under the Influence'

Outcome Sought 2

Prevent sexual violence through increased awareness of its nature and prevalence in all contexts and of the practical measures that can be taken to reduce risks and opportunities

Actions

2.1 Incorporate communications to potential victims about the association between excessive drinking and sexual violence within alcohol prevention publicity and education programmes which proposing safe drinking practices and appropriate personal safety precautions

2.2 Target information towards young women and students in particular, utilising 'student nights; and fresher week events

2.3 All Strategy Groups, including those which are addressing domestic violence, to incorporate information about sexual violence in their publicity

2..4 Incorporate preventative measures within the good practice initiatives which are led by the Licensing Strategy Group and Violent Crime & Alcohol Related Crime and Disorder Groups

Outcome Sought 3

Increase reporting of sexual violence through improved public confidence in the criminal justice system and lower rate of attrition which is well publicised

3.1 Support Sussex Police in the delivery of their Rape, Sexual Violence and Serious Sexual Offences Strategy which aims to improve the investigation, detection and prosecution of cases, identifying appropriate partnership and support action for the CDRP.

3.2 Raise awareness of the role of the police Sexual Offence Liaison Officers

3.3 Consider publicising the hand book: 'From Report to Court : a Handbook for Adult Survivors of Sexual Violence ' which meets the needs of victims and witnesses to a greater extent .

3.4 Target information towards those groups who are most at risk and/or least likely to report, recognising gender, religious and cultural factors

Outcome Sought 4

Improved victim care and support services which also assist police investigations and prosecutions.

4.1 Participate in the Sussex Police led, steering group which is taking forward the development of the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (in Crawley) working towards the establishment of effective arrangements for the care and support for victims in Brighton & Hove. This initiative also provides a link with NHS sexual health strategies and public health delivery plans

4.2 In partnership with the Third Sector organisations, support wherever possible, the provision of local crisis and immediate care provision as well as provision for sustained support and access to services

4.3 Consider the feasibility (develop a Business Case) of establishing Independent Sexual Violence Advisors who provide independent support, risk assessment and safety planning, link with the specialist DV Courts, support clients through statement taking, pre-court visits and trials and who can refer clients to health services and assist with housing and childcare arrangements

4.4 Consider identifying and meeting the training needs of those who may come in to contact with victims, including those who may deal with first disclosures (GPs, A&E providers, Health Visitors, Mental Health providers, youth workers, voluntary sector agencies, community groups and so on)

4.5 Identify appropriate actions which will ensure compliance with Gender Equality duties, particularly those which require the provision of appropriate services for victims of crimes where the majority of victims are women: In addition, consider how services for male victims of sexual crimes can be delivered in an accessible and appropriate environment.

Outcome Sought 5

To support the work programme of the Sex Workers Steering Group which seeks to reduce risks and provide routes out of prostitution and related circumstances.

Actions

5.1 Identify aims, outcomes and actions which are to be delivered by the Steering Group and which together further develop a strategic approach

5.2 Support the police led Operations which seek to identify and deal with trafficked women

5.3 Encourage the active and increased use of the 'Ugly Mugs' or 'Dodgy Punter' schemes and other national good practice initiatives which will increase safety of prostitutes, identify perpetrators and bring them to justice

5.4 Continue to target those most at risk, through maintaining relationships with individual sex workers and their increased access into drug and alcohol services and alternative housing and employment options

Outcome Sought 6

Reduce fear, particularly by women, of rape and sexual assault

Actions

6.1 All work aimed at improving public perceptions of levels of crime and disorder and to reduce fear of crime, to particularly address those crimes of serious sexual offences, sexual assault and rape and others which are of most concern to women

Outcome Sought 7

Safeguard and build the resilience of children and young people to sexual assault and exploitation

Actions

7.1 Continue the delivery of the five outcomes of the Every Child matters Outcomes and in particular, deliver the work programmes of the 'Staying Safe' and 'Be Healthy' work programme which are overseen by the Local Safeguarding Children Board . These programmes include actions to reduce the risks associated with unsupervised internet use by children and young people .

7.2 Education programmes within schools and those targeted towards young people which address alcohol and drug misuse, sex and relationship education, teenage pregnancy and other risks, to include awareness raising of the association with sexual violence and how those risks can be reduced through personal safety measures.

7.3 Implement the findings of the Joint Agency Audit into the Incidence, Recording and Outcomes of Child Sexual Abuse Investigations in Brighton & Hove

7.4 Identify appropriate and effective early interventions for young people who sexually abuse or are at risk of abusing and support the delivery of those interventions

7.5 Implement the findings of 'Tipping The Iceberg' – A Pan-Sussex Study of Young People at Risk of Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking

7.6 Support compliance as appropriate with 'Special Measures' in courts (compliance with 'Speaking Up for Justice' and Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999) which offers enhanced protection for child witnesses

Outcome Sought 8

Work towards the development of a holistic strategy for tackling rape and serious sexual offences and violence which accords to national good practice, builds on existing plans and expertise together with a structure which supports multi- agency delivery of an agreed work programme

Actions

8.1 Establish and support a multi-agency Sexual Violence and Abuse Forum which receives reports from and co-ordinates actions being taken forward by the individual working groups that are identified within this Strategy