

AAFDA

Minutes/Notes from AGM Held on 7th January 2011 at Swindon Council Offices

Chief Constable Brian Moore QPM, ACPO lead Violence and Public Protection Portfolio

Thanked Frank for his balanced and passionate views.

The purpose of the police is to protect life, prevent crime, investigate and bring people to justice. The police are the cavalry; an emergency service to stabilise a situation. The police are not there to put everything right, and they have to work with others. The police have a vital role, but great limitations.

Numbers from professionals (2003 – 2004).

Every Year:

1.3 million episodes of domestic abuse in the UK.

Police hear of 700,000 domestic abuse incidents (includes a neighbour reporting/ overhearing a domestic argument).

250,000 arrests.

80,000 prosecutions.

70-80% conversion rate – prosecution to conviction.

Domestic abuse is a complex phenomenon. Criminal justice is based upon the victim giving evidence, both at the incident and in Court.

Thirty years ago, brave female advocates said that the victim's wishes are paramount. But this is not true in some cases as the State has a duty to protect the victim, irrespective of their wishes or views at the time. The victim may be fearful and not in the right frame of mind to make the right decision.

One sixth to one seventh of homicides are as a result of domestic abuse. The murder rate is the lowest for some years and the ratio for homicides due to domestic abuse remains the same.

Police Training

Police are provided initially with 36 weeks of training, but only 2 days are set aside to train for Domestic Abuse. The 2 days training consists of 'Protect Life', 'Stop Crime' and 'Create a Safe Space'.

How do we put such a complex issue into training? Could we change current training? Yes, but we would be looking at training to handle .2 billion interactions (700,000 incidents x 250,000 employees) and we're not sure how this could be done.

DASH (Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment) risk assessment process has given the Police the ability to change and adapt in the same way nationally to get every situation right.

What are we going to do?

Domestic Abuse and austerity. There are currently 41 different agencies involved in protecting and supporting victims in the Wiltshire area alone, all making decisions on the limited information that they have. We need to change the law to centralise data so the agencies can make informed decisions. We have to look at the resources and choices.

Brian has been writing articles recently about simple safeguarding measures to keep people safe.

Domestic Abuse recommendations

In 2009, Brian asked all the major police forces to paint a picture of a typical serial perpetrator, but got little back so he manually trawled through the data to build a picture. He identified c. 25,000 men, nationwide, who were perceived to have committed domestic abuse against 2 or more partners, 121 of these perpetrators being in Wiltshire. Brian considered that prospective partners of these individuals might wish to know of their past in the same way they are entitled to know about certain sex offenders.

Brian made 10 recommendations to Government including:

1. MARACs (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences) need to be on a statutory footing. These are good people working together. There are 240 MARACs but 366 Local Authority areas.

2. 'Right to know' for the public. Brian thought that one should be able to check if a prospective partner has a record of perpetrating domestic abuse just as one can currently check if certain individuals are sex offenders

A focus group was asked how they would react should they be in a position to access this information or knew this information :

One third said they wouldn't want to know this information

One third would access it and if negative, would dis-connect with the new partner.

One third would hold the information, but continue with the partner.

3. New power for the Police, to serve a Domestic Violence Protection Notice. This is to stop the perpetrator returning to the home or having contact with the partner for 48 hours. Following on, it would also give them the power to seek an extension, in the Magistrates Court, for a minimum of 14 days and a maximum of 28 days. The threshold for decision making would be a balance of probabilities. This could provide safe space for the victim.

The victim could then have thinking time, get advice, and could take out an injunction. The victim always has the right to make their own decision.

Wiltshire, Greater Manchester and West Mercia forces will be piloting this first.

4. New offense of causing suicide by domestic abuse. Brian asked the Director of Public Prosecutions if a new law was needed. The DPP's view was that manslaughter legislation adequately covered this.

Brian is searching for a case to test this, there potentially being one in Wiltshire. He has asked all Coroners and other bodies to look out for a suitable case. This is most prevalent in the Asian community. He thought it was right to put reasonable pressure on the Government on this matter.

He stressed that the Police Service has limitations. The "can-do"

approach of the police, should not stop other partners/agencies being involved.