

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

**ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
AD HOC PANEL - SUPPORT SERVICES FOR VICTIMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

1.30pm 29 MARCH 2010

COMMITTEE ROOM 2, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Watkins (Chairman); Councillors McCaffery (Deputy Chairman), Older and Phillips

Also in attendance: Michelle Pooley, Arthur Law, Martyn Sullivan, Lisa Dando, Jules Mercy, Naomi Gosling, Jo-Anne Welsh, Libby Young

PART ONE

6. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

6a Declaration of substitutes

6.1 Substitutes are not allowed on scrutiny panels.

6b Declaration of interest

6.2 There were no declarations of interest.

6c Declaration of party whip

6.3 There were no declarations of party whip.

6d Exclusion of press and public

6.4 In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained on the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if the members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in section 100I of the said Act.

6.5 **Resolved** – That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

6.6 It was also noted that should there be a requirement or preference for any evidence to be given in private, either at this meeting or any future meetings of the panel, then members of the panel would support witnesses in this and enter into a Part Two

situation. Additionally, if there were a need for members of the panel to leave the room then there was a female deputy chair who would be able to take over the proceedings. Lastly, if there were any members of the public who wished to share their experiences of the services provided in the city but would not wish to do this in a public meeting then one-to-one sessions could be arranged at a time and location preferable to the witness.

7. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

- 7.1 The chairman welcomed all the speakers and thanked them for taking the time to come and speak to the panel and for being involved in the panel's evidence gathering process.
- 7.2 The scrutiny panel is focusing on what support services are already available in the city and whether they are operating as they should be, as well as identifying where there are gaps in the provision of local services. So far the panel has identified and taken evidence from a number of organisations which offer support services to those affected by sexual violence. After today's meeting the panel will meet once more in public before considering what recommendations it will be making.
- 7.3 It was noted that there were a number of speakers present at the meeting and that the speakers would have approximately 10 minutes to present their information to the panel, followed by some questions from members of the panel. It was agreed that the format of the meeting would be kept informal so as to enable the speakers to ask questions of each other and for all present to be able to engage in the issues being discussed.

8. EVIDENCE-GATHERING SESSION

8 Evidence-Gathering sessions

- 8.1 The panel heard evidence from a number of witnesses.
- 8.2a Lisa Dando and Jules Mercy from the Brighton Women's Centre gave evidence to the panel.**
- 8.2b The Brighton Women's Centre offers a number of specialised and generic services to women in Brighton and Hove. The centre offers a 12 week course of one-to-one counselling as well as a 12 week course of one-to-one specialist rape and sexual assault counselling. The centre receives referrals for counselling from the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) in Crawley. Additionally, the centre offers a 12 week one-to-one course of counselling for women who have experienced domestic violence and this is offered in partnership with RISE. The women's centre also offers women only; drop-ins, advice, guidance and signposting to other services; access to a range of training; self development courses incorporating creative, educational and employment opportunities; self-esteem courses which are offered in partnership with the Family Intervention Project; and holistic therapies. The centre also offers an Ofsted registered pre-school.
- The Brighton Women's Centre offers support to all women irrespective of their background. It is important that women have access to women only services to ensure

that those women who wouldn't otherwise access services are able to. The centre is accessed by women who are vulnerable and disadvantaged to address issues such as accommodation, poverty, mental health and emotional well-being, physical health, low self esteem, sexual health, relationship difficulties, employment and training, domestic violence, sexual violence, and support with childcare. The women's centre focuses on providing generic, women only services and offers these services in a holistic approach as possible. Women tend to access the centre for a specific service but often end up accessing a range of services at the centre.

The women's centre provides a number of preventative services for vulnerable women who are in the high risk categories for sexual violence. A young women's experience of sexual violence, as is acknowledged in the Stern Review, is often in conjunction with other factors such as previous experience of sexual abuse, mental health, learning disabilities, and isolation. These factors lead to women having low self esteem and a lack of internalised self worth which predisposes them to becoming targets for sexual violence. Vulnerable women are far more likely to be at risk of sexual violence. The women's centre works to support women in crisis as well as those who have had historical experiences of sexual violence and will support women through court process as well as offering emotional support. The value of a generic service such as the Brighton Women's Centre, is that women will present with a single issue, such as depression or anxiety, which they may not associate with previous experiences of sexual violence. The therapeutic interventions offered by the centre and its partners help to support women to deal with a number of related factors and issues they may have.

The women's centre is accessed by a large number of women who have been subjected to sexual violence, as the figures for those accessing counselling services at the centre demonstrate. In 09/10 167 clients were referred to the centre's counselling service of which, 11% were dealing with sexual violence, 19% were dealing with childhood sexual abuse, and 26% with domestic violence. This means that 55% of referrals to the counselling services at the centre were associated with some form of physical or sexual violence. In 09/10 104 women accessed and were offered counselling of which, 11% were dealing with sexual violence, 16% with childhood sexual abuse, and 21% with domestic violence. A total of 51% of women accessing counselling at the centre had experienced some form of sexual or physical violence. Demand for services at the centre outstrips supply by 40% and there is a waiting list of 2 to 3 months for those wanting counselling services. The women's centre leads on the Inspire Project and this project is anticipating that referrals from those who have experienced sexual and domestic violence to increase. It is already known that 44% of women offenders are dealing with sexual violence, abuse or domestic violence.

- 8.2c Members of the panel asked which organisations and agencies make referrals to the women's centre.
- 8.2d The panel heard that the centre receives referrals from a range of organisations, agencies, and professionals including; statutory agencies such as the SARC, the Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs), GPs, Midwives, East and West Access Mental Health Teams, Royal Sussex Hospital, Police, Sussex Probation, Family Intervention Project and Social Services. The centre also receives referrals from the voluntary sector including; the Crime Reduction Initiative, Age Concern, YMCA, BHT, Brighton Unemployed Families Centre and partners from the Women's Services

Strategic Network (WSSN). The centre also makes referrals out particularly to the other women's organisations in the city (RISE, Threshold, the Survivors' Network, and Oasis) as well as other specific agencies depending on a client's need.

- 8.2e Members of the panel commented that there appeared to be an enormous amount of need within the city for the centre's services as well as women needing referring to other services. It was asked whether there is a nucleus of clients which have to wait for a long time before they can get into the system and access services, and whether the services supplied were adequate for the needs of clients and whether there are any identified gaps or areas where the council can offer support to the women's third sector organisations in the city. Members of the panel asked if, because of the 2 to 3 month waiting list, many women were deterred from accessing services.
- 8.2f The panel heard that capacity was a real issue both for the Brighton Women's Centre as well as for the other women's third sector organisations in the city. Some women do drop out because of the long waiting list and some others will access other services instead.
- 8.2g Members of the panel asked if those agencies and organisations making referrals to the centre also assisted the centre with funding.
- 8.2h The panel heard that the Brighton Women's Centre receives some funds from the SARC for referrals. However as an organisation the centre does not receive funding from the PCT or the police and has only just recently received some funding from the council via a discretionary grant. The centre has no sustainable long-term funding.
- 8.2i Members of the panel commented that funding was a constant problem for third sector organisations; however, as the services they are now offering could be considered statutory services then they should be receiving funding to deliver these.
- 8.2j The panel heard that funding problems is a continual and historic problem for the women's centre. Women need to be able to access services which they can trust, and which feel safe, however, this can be problematic to achieve when sustainability is difficult to maintain and the centre is not always certain that it can run services for the duration of which women may wish to access them.
- 8.2k Members of the panel asked which other third sector organisations in the city the women's centre worked with.
- 8.2l The panel heard that the women's centre works closely with RISE. RISE works with those who have experienced domestic violence and so there is some cross over in client groups between the centre and RISE. The women's centre is also a member of the Women's Services Strategic Network (WSSN). As a result of the development of the WSSN and the partnership working which has resulted from it, the Network received funding to run the Inspire Project. The Inspire Project works with female offenders many of whom would have been the victim of historical violence which may have contributed to them becoming offenders. The women's centre was approached by the Ministry of Justice to apply for the funding. As it was key to the delivery of the service that a holistic approach to implementation and design was taken and as there is a successful women's partnership in operation in the city the WSSN made a joint application for the

funding and will be delivering the services in partnership with each other. It is essential that there is a generic women's organisation, such as the Brighton Women's Centre, in the city which can make referrals to other specialised service providers. Many women when accessing services may not know what services they wish to access and the initial route into services may not be the most appropriate one.

- 8.2m Members of the panel asked whether there were effective working relationships between the women's organisations in the city and whether there were any barriers to working together. Members of the panel also asked if the women's centre would be in favour of ring-fenced funding.
- 8.2n The panel heard that the women's third sector organisations in the city work very well together and had worked very hard to build a partnership to enable them to work more cohesively and holistically and in an integrated manner. The grant from the Ministry of Justice given to the WSSN is a demonstration of the faith which the national government has in the sector and in the Women's partnership in the city. The panel heard that ring-fenced funding would be a start. However, the women accessing services at the centre usually present a variety of issues which require support. For example, a woman who has experienced domestic violence is likely to require not only support to overcome the trauma associated with domestic violence, but to require support to build her self confidence, help with accessing training, education and employment, housing support, and support to overcome poverty. This means that a holistic approach is required to supporting women and enabling needs to be addressed and this is best achieved through partnership working within the sector and it is the partnership which needs to be invested in, and as soon as possible.
- 8.2o Members of the panel asked if the partnership was being invested in and whether there was competition between members of the partnership for funding.
- 8.2p The panel heard that the partnership is currently struggling as it does not have sustainable funding or resources; the services are being delivered it is just the partnership is struggling to do this. The partnership has worked hard to overcome competitive barriers and is working hard to continue to overcome any problems which it faces. Whilst the women's centre works with women across any issue, it concentrates on providing the generic services which women require and in order to do this the centre needs to be able to refer women on to specialist support services. Funding is a continual problem for the women's centre and whilst the centre has received funding from the Ministry of Justice, until March 2011, the centre will really struggle next year. This is unfortunately a familiar problem as the centre has struggled to find funding throughout its history as an organisation.
- 8.2q Members of the panel asked if the centre had the power to change anything what would they change, would it be to receive core funding so that they do not have to compete with other organisations for access to funding and so they could concentrate on delivering services rather than bidding for money.
- 8.2r The panel heard that there is a need to get beyond the situation whereby the centre has to apply for funding every year. The centre really needs 3 or 5 year pots of money. It is really difficult for service providers to effectively plan medium and long-term service provision for very vulnerable women when there is no stability in funding. If service

users state particular needs then the centre needs to ensure that they have access to funding to be able to develop and set up the service, as well as get it running and deliver it. The funding from the Ministry of Justice will require the centre to develop and start effectively delivering services within a very short timeframe. Service development takes time and it takes time to put services in place and current funding cycles do not take this into account.

The centre and the sector should be better supported by the statutory agencies in the city. The women's third sector organisations need infrastructure support through further development of the WSSN. The WSSN want to continue to make the gains they have achieved through the partnership and require a Development Worker Post to be able to continue to do this. The Development Worker would be able to support the partnership to thrive and help to co-ordinate the organisations in the city. Currently the women's organisations in the city need support to work in partnership as they have all taken this task on alongside their day jobs and it is hard therefore for the organisations to maintain their own management as well as work on the WSSN and invest the time to develop the partnership. In order to continue to work in partnership a Development Worker is needed to do the job of developing the partnership. The sector is faced with capacity issues and yet development and investment in the WSSN is key to achieving representation of the sector at a strategic level within the city.

- 8.2s It was noted that there is a gap in many of the statutory services where gender specific services should sit and that there is a link between child abuse and later victimisation as well as offending behaviour. The panel were asked to note that there is some unwanted sexual contact occurring for young people and that there are some opportunities in schools in HSE and RE classes to undertake some education and prevention work.
- 8.2t Members of the panel noted these remarks and also commented that there does not appear to be a single individual within children's services who is responsible for tackling the sexual violence agenda. Additionally, the panel noted they may want to hear evidence from the Adoption and Fostering service as there are cases of children experiencing, or possibly experiencing, sexual abuse in this service area. It was asked as to what the impact on the women's centre is in terms of either preventing victimisation or offending behaviour.
- 8.2u The panel heard that the women's centre and other women's organisations in the city needed to ensure that there was an approach to early prevention as this work is very crucial. At the women's centre Ofsted registered preschool groups are offered for children of women accessing services so the centre becomes aware of children who visit the centre and their mother's situation. As the centre is aware of a child's background and home environment, abuse can sometimes be flagged up at this point in a child's life and the centre has been involved and intervened in child protection cases and conferences as a result of identifying abusive situations. In terms of early intervention for adults, this can be problematic as a woman who presents at the centre may not identify all the reasons why they have chosen to access services, and so violence and abuse may not emerge during initial contact stages. Women rarely feel confident about talking about abuse and violence as a factor that contributes to mental health issues or low self esteem.

- 8.2v Members of the panel noted that it was indeed difficult to undertake effective prevention work in this area as it is difficult to identify and target those that would benefit from early interventions.
- 8.2w It was noted that early intervention and prevention work is crucial and needs to be done ideally from pre-birth and all the way through an individual's lifespan. Some of the tools and systems used by social workers and specialist agencies to detect domestic violence should also be used to ask about and identify sexual violence. Frontline workers need to not be frightened to ask about sexual violence. The difficulty is the complexity of early intervention and how to demonstrate that early intervention brings about effective outcomes; organisations need to be able to show what the outcomes are, and how they are met. This requires, however, a longitudinal attitude to looking at interventions and outcomes and requires at least 3 or 5 year funding cycles and for agencies to look at how outcomes are turned around and improved.
- 8.2x Members of the panel noted that domestic violence is often talked about but society does not feel as comfortable talking about sexual violence; likewise domestic violence programmes attract money more easily than sexual violence programmes.
- 8.2y It was noted that the difference is arguably a point of language as domestic violence often includes an element of sexual violence but that the close association between the two does mean that some forms of sexual violence are overlooked.
- 8.2z The panel heard that one of the reasons why domestic violence is spoken of and there has been a lot of work done on this issue in Brighton and Hove is that there have been a lot of under-funded organisations working hard to deliver services and to ensure that the issue of domestic violence is on the city's agenda. The women's centre does not want the issue of sexual violence to take as long as it took for domestic violence to be on the city's agenda.
- 8.2aa It was noted that young people receive a lot of education about sexual health but receive very little about what healthy relationships are and what should not happen in healthy relationships. Very few young people are made aware of what they deserve and should have in a relationship. There is a need to empower young people to know about what it is they want from a relationship and to be explicit about what they don't, and should they need to where to go to access support services and information.
- 8.2bb Members of the panel asked if the women's centre supports women who are entering the UK who have experienced sexual violence and are HIV positive.
- 8.2cc The panel heard that the women's centre will support these women and that the Sussex Beacon runs a service for such clients. The women's centre works in partnership with Sussex Beacon and it is key that these partnership arrangements exist so women can be referred on to agencies that work on specific issues. A lot more support for this type of client is needed in the city. At the moment the women's centre and its partners are providing services but it is the tip of the iceberg. There is stigma and shame attached to experiences of domestic and sexual violence and so experiences are kept hidden and women will often blame themselves for the violent experience they have had.
- 8.3a Naomi Gosling from Stopover gave evidence to the panel.**

8.3b Stopover is a supported housing project for young women aged 16-24. Stopover runs two housing projects. One is high support housing project which is staffed 24 hrs a day where clients can stay for a maximum of 9 months. Stopover Two provides less support and is staffed only during office hours. The stay is for up to two years. The residents at Stopover Two play an active role in managing the safety of the house. Many clients will move from the high supported housing project into the second project. The supported housing projects are female only and there is a rule against men entering at Stopover One. The projects operate on a safe house ethos, they are not refuges, and the tenants work with the project workers to ensure that the housing is kept safe. The project supports young women to develop independent living skills including skills in managing their tenancy so they can cope on their own in the future. For the majority of young women referred to the project Stopover is their first point of call into services; whilst the threat of homelessness may be the reason they go into supported housing, issues with mental health, drug or alcohol abuse, family breakdown, domestic or sexual violence often emerge.

The Stopover project will help young women to identify an independent living plan and the needs which they have when they move in. None of the project staff are trained counsellors so they will refer women on to other services to ensure that their needs are met. All referrals to Stopover come from the council. The project does not have the capacity for self referrals to be made. The Stopover project will refer clients to a wide range of services such as counselling services available through YAC, YPC and the Women's Centre, the RU OK project if clients have issues with drugs or alcohol and if they are a bit older (over 18) they may be referred to Oasis. For cases of sexual abuse or violence if it has been a recent event the project will support women to contact the police and if other specific services are required then they will refer women on to other agencies such as the Survivors' Network or the SARC or a Family Planning clinic.

It is clear from the work that has been undertaken with young women that some of those who have experienced sexual violence or abuse will not know or perceive themselves to have been a victim of abuse. Very few young women understand what appropriate behaviour within a relationship is and the impact of exchanging things for sexual favours is not widely understood. It is also clear that both domestic and sexual violence is massively on the increase amongst the young women which Stopover has contact with and there is a real lack of understanding about what it is that these young women are faced with and how they may challenge it. Young women need to be educated about what the experiences that they have had are, and preventative work needs to be done amongst this client group.

The majority of Stopover's funding comes from the Supported People Fund. The council also gives the project a discretionary grant and the project receives funding from a church. The work that the project does is not specifically around supporting victims of sexual violence but around enabling vulnerable young women to manage a tenancy agreement. However, it would be great if the project could offer some services. Whilst it is great that there are services which Stopover can signpost their clients on to, for a lot of young women accessing the Stopover project they have built a relationship with their worker and would rather seek further support from their worker. It would be great if those with specialist skills could come to the clients so that they do not have to leave the

safe environment of the Stopover project. It would perhaps be useful if Stopover could get involved in the WSSN.

The Stopover project is aware of an individual who had hearing difficulties who was recently raped. There were no specialist services which she could access and the way she was treated by the police was appalling; she had to trek all the way across town to give a statement, she was advised not to change her clothes and she had to wait the full day for an interpreter to arrive. This is just one example of how a disability can make you far more vulnerable to experiencing violence and then in the aftermath far more unlikely to receive the support that is needed.

- 8.3c Members of the panel asked what the referral criteria were for those being referred to the Stopover project.
- 8.3d The panel heard that the project is available to those young women who are in danger of being homeless or insecurely housed. Those aged 16-17 are prioritised. Clients are housed in 24 hr supported housing for only 9 months and if they develop the independent living skills required then they can be transferred onto Stopover's other project. However this is a very short space of time for these very vulnerable young women to develop the skills they need to move on.
- 8.3e Members of the panel asked what happens to women aged over 24 and whether there was a safe project which they can gain access to, and whether any of the women who access Stopover have children.
- 8.3f The panel heard that those aged over 24 could access adult housing through BHT or the YMCA although these are mixed housing, and that the Stopover project could only house single women and there is a separate project available for young moms which Stopover can refer clients to. BHT do have an all female project which specialises in mental health, this is a very small project though.
- 8.3g Members of the panel asked if there was specialist housing available for very young women who have experienced domestic violence or sexual violence and yet are still very dependent on their partners. There is a concern that this service is not available to young women who will need support for a long time.
- 8.3h The panel heard that there is not enough supported housing for young women and young mothers in the city. There used to be a peer mentoring project which undertook outreach work to young women. However the funding for the project was dropped and so Stopover has had to stop the project. The YMCA does offer some projects of this nature. The women's centre is currently working with Stopover to provide a mentoring project which also offers support on education, employment and housing options. The trouble is that for many young women who gain access to safe housing it can take time for them to identify their own support needs and develop the confidence needed to go out and access external services; it can be much more effective to bring services to them instead.
- 8.3i Members of the panel asked if rough sleepers accessed the Stopover project

- 8.3j The panel heard that no rough sleepers had accessed the project in the last 4 years and that Stopover tended to receive referrals from the council who had been contacted by young women who were 'sofa surfing' rather than actually street homeless.
- 8.3k It was noted that the BHT have a supported house for women who also have mental health issues. It is a valuable service for those who have had to deal with sexual violence as a young person, or for those young women who are unsure of their sexuality, or for those who may have complexities in their lives which may or not be directly due to sexual violence. There are a number of 'sofa surfers' in the city, and there are both young men and women in the city doing this. The city does have female rough sleepers who appear at varying times and often disappear quite quickly as they become either 'sofa surfers' or 'bed down' with others. These women are particularly vulnerable towards being sexually exploited and towards exchanging sexual favours for somewhere to sleep.
- 8.3l It was noted that there are some faith organisations within the city which will not fund projects helping vulnerable members of the LGBT community and that this may impact on projects supporting those who have become victims of sexual exploitation or sexual violence.
- 8.3m It was noted that it was very useful to be invited to attend today's meeting so that information could be given to the panel about what work was going on in the city to support victims of sexual violence and to both be able to raise awareness about ongoing work as well as highlight issues in the sector.
- 8.4a Martyn Sullivan, CEO of Mankind, was invited to give evidence.**
- 8.4b Mankind offers services to men who have experienced sexual violence either in their childhood or as an adult. The services offered consist mainly of one-to-one counselling services. In the past Mankind has offered group counselling services however the funding for this is no longer available and whilst more is being sought for the time being this service has been dropped. The benefit of offering both one-to-one counselling as well as group meetings is that it gives a client the opportunity to explore their experience in private as well as in a group context where their experience becomes 'normalised' as they meet others who have also experienced sexual violence. Mankind works with men who have experienced sexual violence to offer them therapeutic outcomes which sit outside the female/feminist construct and approach. As a result Mankind is working in a way which has not been researched and is as a result developing an approach and services as it progresses. Mankind offers victims of sexual violence an opportunity to regain a sense of masculinity, which is often lost as a result of the experience they have had, a sense of their self and their self within society. Mankind offers clients either a male or female counsellor to work with however this is potentially problematic as one third of Mankind's clients are abused or violated by a woman. Mankind's other main client group is the families and partners of those who have experienced sexual violence. Male survivors do not exist in isolation and a wide support network is very important to encouraging recovery from an event. Mankind offers one-to-one counselling with partners and family and hope to, as this client group grows, offer group counselling as well.

In 2008/09 Mankind had a 55% increase in the number of men accessing their services, probably as a result of advertising and a campaign about their services which was run in the local newspapers. Mankind recently redesigned their website and they now receive the majority of referrals online. Taking out the first stage of human contact works well for men who want to access services; they can fill out an online form and this is easier for them to do than picking up a phone. The next stage is that Mankind will contact them to arrange an appointment. This referral process has increased the number of men who have followed through from contacting the service to actually attending counselling sessions. There is currently an 8-12 week waiting list for counselling sessions and this can fluctuate depending on the number of volunteer counsellors which are available. Mankind spends a lot of time recruiting and training counsellors and the services offered by Mankind are impacted upon every time a counsellor leaves.

Mankind has built up knowledge of its services mostly through word of mouth and through the campaigns which it has run and the posters and images from the campaign are widely circulated amongst statutory agencies in the city, such as police, housing, and GP surgeries. Mankind makes very few referrals on to other services but rather tends to be an end of the line service for their clients who may have first contacted other services such as alcohol or substance misuse services. However, these individuals are often living chaotic lives and will struggle to attend two agencies at once to access services. The result is that there is a large drop out from services for this vulnerable client group. To address this Mankind with the Crime Reduction Initiative have been working on a research project aimed to study what the impact would be if a Mankind counsellor was able to provide specialist counselling for men alongside the drug substance misuse services. This may prevent men from dropping out of services if they only have to attend one agency and so have an impact on reducing substance misuse as the likely cause of misuse is also attended too at the same time. The research project would be important to provide evidence for the benefits of such a joint-service delivery approach. Mankind have, however, been unable to find funding to undertake the research project. This is a real problem as the potential learning which could be achieved for other joint services with probation and mental health services is being lost.

- 8.4c Members of the panel asked what the difficulties were for men opening up to services.
- 8.4d The panel heard that men find it difficult to open up about their experience of sexual violence as traditionally men have not been given a voice on this matter. Sexual violence is typically associated with women as the victims and men as the perpetrators. Childhood sexual abuse is more commonly associated with young boys, however, when they become adults they are expected just to deal with the traumas they have experienced, whilst women at this stage in their lives want to access services. There are many myths surrounding male experience of sexual violence and abuse. If you ask the public about sexual violence you will get these stereotypical answers in which there is some truth, but hidden within these stereotypes are the figures and the men who have experienced sexual violence. Men find the experience of sexual violence traumatic for many of the same reasons which a woman would, but also for different reasons. Men have a fear that if they talk about being sexually abused then they will be seen as being the perpetrators rather than the victims. Sexual violence can also raise serious issues around sexuality for male victims. The bottom line is that sexual violence is a trauma, and the trauma doesn't care what gender the victim is.

Mankind offers a people centred approach to supporting men with a range of problems and services. Once men are involved in counselling then Mankind will help them to access housing and financial support and refer men on to other agencies or organisations. Mankind would like to work more closely with other services in the city, but lots of organisations in the city offer women only services and therefore forming links can be a challenge as there is a clear gender barrier to Mankind entering some forums because of their client group. It is problematical that most of the work being done on this issue is with women as Mankind, which is a small organisation, will struggle to undertake the necessary research and service development to bring the issue of male sexual violence to the table. Mankind hopes to work with the Crime Reduction Initiative in the future.

Mankind receives funding from the Big Lottery as well as a few Trust Funds which they have links with. The vast majority of funding in this area is for projects and services for women not men and so Mankind doesn't have access to most Home Office and government funding. Big Lottery gave Mankind funding for 5 years and they are now into year 3 of the 5 year funding. Mankind are currently focusing on how to market and provide services. If they were able to undertake more research they would have more evidence to support what works and therefore potentially have better access to funding. From March 2011 Mankind will be desperately seeking additional funding.

- 8.4e Members of the panel asked whether there were funding streams available for services for men, and whether Mankind received referrals from the SARC.
- 8.4f The panel heard that there were no funding streams which Mankind were aware of. At this moment in time Mankind is not set up to receive referrals from the SARC. Funding from the SARC is on a case by case basis and therefore funding from the SARC can not be factored into service planning and development. Mankind is current recruiting counsellors that will be accredited by the SARC. However one of Mankind's clients recently had a negative experience of the SARC whereby he got referred on to several wrong agencies and only heard about Mankind when a friend told him about it. This client had contact with the police, Threshold and the SARC and yet no one had referred him on to Mankind. Mankind raised this with the SARC but have yet to receive a response.
- 8.4g Members of the panel asked if male victims of sexual violence would benefit from a SARC facility in Brighton and Hove.
- 8.4h The panel heard that the SARC is really only intended for those who have experienced a recent crisis and has a remit around reporting and prosecuting, with support services and counselling added as a bolt on. The SARC hasn't been thought through very well and there is currently no data available about those accessing the SARC and there has been no evaluation as to the success of such a service. In Brighton and Hove someone who has experienced a recent sexual violence event may call the police however both men and women have reservations about doing this. The police do have a specialist response team which works specifically on sex crimes however very few members of the public are aware of this. Most of the agencies working in this area do not advertise their services as this costs resources. Ideally, there should be a central hub in Brighton, either a helpline of a website, which is identified as a separate organisation, which anyone can access to talk to someone. This 'listening service' could then undertake

proactive referrals, or if it is a website then individuals can complete a form and then receive a call back. The hub could act as a central access point for a variety of services, and the hub can then be advertised as one central point throughout the city, as well as act as a body which can educate the public about some of the facts of sexual violence.

- 8.4i Members of the panel noted that in the short-term officers are working to get services in the city working together so that in the longer-term more people will go to the police to report crimes and from there receive the support services which they need.
- 8.4j The panel heard that if an individual is not sure who to go to then approaching an agency can be really quite difficult, sometimes a client may wish to know more about a service before accessing it and therefore if there is a central point which they can call to talk to someone about what services are available and get information on them then this would be very useful.
- 8.4k Members of the panel asked if there was a need for a 24 hour service which victims could access to receive support.
- 8.4l The panel heard that when commissioning and planning services in the city data on how these services are used need to be taken into account in order to consider future planning of a service. This would also help to identify which agencies are being accessed the most and identify services which are not available. Having a 24 hour service available would help this as well as gaining client feedback on services. Again having an independent source of information on how to access services would facilitate this. Having a one stop number or website which clients can access which is not attached to a single organisation would be a favoured approach.
- 8.4m It was noted that other communities may favour emphasis being placed on support pathways rather than a single support organisation with a consortium put in place to judge what the referral and support pathways should be.
- 8.4n Members of the panel noted that there would perhaps be benefit in having a hub in the city with a telephone number which could be answered 24 hours a day and is constantly manned and can be used to point clients in the direction of services.
- 8.4o It was commented that there will be clients who aren't in a physical crisis who will present to services around a particular issue which isn't actually the causal factor of certain behaviours. A hub may be able to provide connections with other services for such clients.
- 8.4p The panel heard that the details would have to be worked out and it is dependent on how the scheme would be marketed.
- 8.4q It was noted that any hub would have to be properly integrated so that there is a real understanding amongst clients as to how the organisation would refer clients on and how organisations would work with each other. The scheme would also have to empower individuals to access services. In reality it is difficult to move clients across quite big barriers both organisational barriers and barriers of perceptions of how services should work. It also needs to be noted that there are different ways that

different service users will want to gain access to services, some may prefer a telephone number others may prefer a using the internet. Referral pathways are crucial.

- 8.4r The panel heard that it is difficult to let potential clients know that services are out there, and ultimately first contacts are only as good as the person speaking on the other end of the telephone.
- 8.4s Members of the panel noted that clients often suffer from multiple issues and will choose just one issue as their point of access into services.
- 8.4t Mankind is based in Newhaven and there are definite advantages of being based outside the city as men can travel to access services unobserved, additionally there are difficulties as it will discourage some men from travelling. Mankind sees clients from across the South East area as far away as Kent, however, 60-70% of their clients are from Brighton and Hove. 400,000 to 600,000 men in the South East region may have experienced some form of sexual violence.
- 8.4u Members of the panel asked what language men preferred to use when talking about sexual violence.
- 8.4v The panel heard that Mankind and its clients try not to use the word rape as many men may not identify with having experienced rape. Mankind tends to prefer the phrase 'unwanted sexual experiences'. There is a problem around the language which is used to talk about experiences and the nature of the events experienced.
- 8.4w Members of the panel asked what the majority of Mankind's client's experiences with sexual violence were.
- 8.4x The panel heard that the majority of clients were those that had been abused as a child and this abuse was often carried out by an older child. Men tend not to report offences to the police or to health agencies and therefore it is unlikely that many men would ever access the SARC. Obviously this is generalised but men may need specific advertising to encourage them to identify with services and this then encourage them to access the services.
- 8.4y It was noted that there is an issue with the legal definition of what the police and the home office consider rape to be.
- 8.5a Jo-Anne Welsh, Director, Brighton Oasis Project was invited to give evidence to the panel.**
- 8.5b Brighton Oasis is a women only drug and alcohol service. In addition it offers therapeutic services for children affected by familial substance misuse, a crèche, and services for women working in the sex industry. Oasis is commissioned to deliver tier 2 and 3 interventions via the PCT and is therefore able to offer open access, initial consultation, and the psycho-social aspects of drug treatment. All drug treatment services in the city are delivered in partnership with the NHS and CRI. Oasis also provides services for those who offend in relation to substance misuse, and outreach services for sex workers. The sex workers are contacted through parlours and at the sex workers homes and there is a general outreach worker who will work with vulnerable women who are insecurely housed and potentially swapping sex for drugs or somewhere to stay but

would not identify themselves as sex workers. There is a high level of childhood sexual abuse amongst this client group who will often revert to substance misuse to cope with the experiences they have had. The client groups which Oasis interacts with are also likely to have had recent experiences of domestic violence. Oasis also works with women offenders on community sentences. Research indicates with this client group that 44% reported experiencing or witnessing childhood sexual abuse and 50% of women in prison reported experiencing previous abuse

Since 2001 a sex worker outreach worker has been employed; the worker is funded by the PCT with money from the sexual health budget and drug treatment budget however it is not fully funded. The service is primarily funded to improve health outcomes for women. As Clients will rarely disclose sexual violence or abuse straight away Oasis works with these women to undertake general work around staying safe, maintaining sexual and physical health and will encourage women to participate in schemes that will reduce the risk of being attacked and experiencing sexual violence. Oasis is involved in the delivery and coordination of the 'ugly mugs' scheme.

In terms of how many women Oasis can support, the Sex Outreach Worker is currently under resourced. In the last couple of years the sex market in the city has changed from having parlours which we knew quite a lot about and through which sex workers were known to operate and identified themselves as sex workers, to a situation where women selling sex are operating in a more transitory manner moving through the city and perhaps across the UK and even Europe. The Oasis sex worker outreach worker (SWOP) increasingly finds that on entering parlours she may well encounter women only once, the next time they are not there and have apparently moved on. It is probably fair to say that the parlours we access are the better run ones where women's health and safety is considered. It is difficult to establish relationships and levels of trust and offer support to women to enable them to stay safe if they are moving on quite quickly, also there are barriers to conveying information to the women if they haven't got the language skills. The workers entering the parlours will use Language Line as a translation service but it is difficult to build on work done and relationships created if the women are moving on quite quickly. Additionally these women will be particularly vulnerable as they will have anxieties about their immigration status in this country and therefore will be cautious of interacting with any form of authority.

- 8.5c Members of the panel asked if women in the sex industry were moving on of their own accord.
- 8.5d The panel heard that it is difficult to say as the movement may be about trying to access the market and the women may be organising themselves around where the market is considered strongest and some women may be working in this country for a couple of months before returning home. Oasis is struggling to understand what is going on in the market locally due to under resourcing and it is not easy to look at other areas of the country and translate experiences; the sex market works very differently for example in Brighton, Ipswich and the centre of London. In Brighton there is no prominent street scene but there are women which are hidden rough sleepers and will not be selling sex for money but may be trading sex for drugs or a place to sleep. It is these women which are hidden to services and are slipping through the net as they will not identify themselves as sex workers.

- 8.5e Members of the panel asked if these women would identify their experiences as a form of sexual violence.
- 8.5f The panel heard that very few women will ever disclose childhood sexual abuse as they will not wish to acknowledge the experiences they have had and will often use extreme coping mechanisms, such as drug and alcohol misuse, to numb themselves against the traumas they have experienced. This is a real challenge for those trying to support these women. One of the main aims of the drug treatment offered by Oasis is to reduce the chaotic lifestyles of users and to introduce an element of stability. Where these women also disclose sexual violence or historic sexual abuse there is a need to stabilise them and prepare them to be able to engage in a therapeutic relationship. It will be quite difficult for a woman who has experienced sexual violence to open up about their experience particularly if they are still misusing drugs and alcohol. If these women are encouraged to open up too soon whilst also experiencing mental health issues and drug use then the chances of them dropping out of therapy are highly likely and they are unlikely to seek therapeutic help in the future.
- 8.5g It was noted by another speaker that if sexual violence counsellors could be engaged with and included in a client's care management programme then clients could be offered a more holistic set of services to support them and their needs.
- 8.5h The panel heard that for the women Oasis interact with who experience sexual violence they are faced with additional difficulties as they are frequently not considered reliable witnesses and thus will have further anxieties about reporting incidents to the police or to the SARC in case they are considered offenders. These fears remain despite the fact that Oasis has worked quite closely with the police and sex workers to build trust and form links and the fact that sex workers will provide intelligence to the police if needed. There is a scheme set up similar to the ugly mugs scheme for sex workers whereby women who may not be considered reliable witnesses can share information about perpetrators that may be targeting vulnerable women. These women will also have issues with self confidence and self esteem and may consider what they have experienced as a result of the choices they have made and the expectation is that if they report an offence then it may reflect on themselves and they are likely to blame themselves and consider themselves partially responsible.
- 8.5i Members of the panel asked what particular service area is a priority for Oasis to develop.
- 8.5j The panel heard that more co-ordination around some of the services which Oasis offers in the city would be useful. There exists already a sex workers steering group and Oasis works with the police to provide services. However more work needs to be done to ensure the strategic direction of the agenda and services in this sector. A coordinator is needed to coordinate responses from the sector.
- 8.5k It was asked if capacity for the coordinator would be best coming from the voluntary sector or whether a strategic lead was needed from within the council or the police.
- 8.5l The panel heard that the best option would be a strategic lead within the council as there are difficulties around meeting individual women's needs and the model used by Oasis may not be the most suitable for all women.

- 8.5m It was noted that it is important that whatever processes are built in, that enough time is allowed for important discussions and debates and for a dialogue to be developed which demonstrates the complexities of the issues surrounding sexual violence.
- 8.5n It was noted that the complexities of the dialogue surrounding men dealing with childhood sexual abuse also needs to be considered.
- 8.5o It was noted that there is probably the need for gender specific support services for victims of sexual violence.
- 8.5p The panel heard that in Liverpool violence against female sex workers is treated as a hate crime and such an approach has helped to reduce violence against women in the sex industry. Such an approach is seen as being good practise from a public health, crime reduction perspective and a self esteem perspective as it does not stigmatise women working in the industry.
- 8.5q It was noted that work needs to be done to support male sex workers.
- 8.5r It was noted by another speaker that it is key when asking the sexual orientation of a client to ensure that the client understands why they are being asked and what this information will be used for. Additionally the client must be given the room to articulate their sexual orientation as they perceive it to be. This needs to be considered when developing interventions for services to support victims of sexual violence.
- 8.5s It was noted by another speaker that from the research that Mankind has undertaken gender identification plays an important role for service users, for example some men would prefer male counsellors, others female depending on the nature of the experience they have had.
- 8.5t It was noted by another speaker that based on data collected as part of the Count me in Two project it was clear that many service users felt uncomfortable being asked about their sexual orientation if they perceived the service to be unfriendly to their needs. However if the data was kept anonymous and confidential then only 3% of those asked were not happy to be asked what their sexual orientation is. The trouble is there is not, across the city, a formalised set of questions which are used when asking for equalities information although the City Inclusion Partnership is looking into this.
- 8.6a Arthur Law and Michelle Pooley representing the Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgendered Domestic Violence and Abuse (LGBT DV&A) Working Group gave evidence to the panel**

The LGBT DV&A Working Group is a partnership hosted by Spectrum and the Brighton & Hove Domestic Violence Forum since 2005. Partner agencies include: Rise, The Clare Project, Gender Trust, LGBT Switchboard, Relate, Allsorts, Count Me In Too Project, Broken Rainbow, Partnership Community Safety Team, Brighton & Hove Housing Services, and Sussex Police. It is estimated that 15% of the population in Brighton and Hove (and this is likely to be an underestimate) identify as LGBT. Whilst there is a vibrant women's sector in the city working to support victims, there needs to be more crossover and discussions between these groups and those representing the

needs of LGBT individuals. Information provided by the Count Me In Too research projects has also highlighted this need for a focus on LGBT experiences of sexual violence. There is not currently in the city a specialised LGBT sexual violence or domestic violence service.

The research data collected as part of the Count Me In Too project around sexual and domestic violence is small and therefore robust data analysis is not possible, however, the figures produced do provide a starting point for discursive conversations around the topic. Both the Count Me In (2000) and the Count Me In Too (2007) projects collected information on sexual violence, however, as the questions asked were different the two sets of information are not directly comparable. Data collected for the Count Me In (2000) project suggests that of those who participated in the project 40% of women and 32% of men had felt that in their lifetime they had been pressured or forced to have sex against their will and half of these had identified this experience as rape. The data from 2000 indicated that women were more likely to be repeat victims, and strangers were most likely to be identified as perpetrators. 92% of survivors responding in 2000 did not report an incident to the police. Of those that did, 32% evaluated their treatment as poor or very poor. In 2000 survivors were asked if that sought any formal (eg counselling) or informal (eg talking with friends and family) support. The data is very difficult to interpret; however, anecdotal information suggests that the more severe an experience of sexual violence is, the less likely it is that an LGBT individual will seek the formal help they need and even more minor incidents of sexual violence will go unreported and not formally supported. The Count Me In data did highlight that there is a lot of counselling available for LGBT individuals to access, however, 15% of those responding indicated that they had experienced inappropriate linkages between services. Additionally, when it comes to issues of sexual violence there is less readiness to use counselling as a support vehicle due to the way that gender is constructed by these services. In 2000 27% of respondents were interested in attending group-work or workshops with other LGBT people.

Data from the Count Me In Too (2007) project suggests that out of those who responded, in the last 5 years, 3% of lesbians, 4% of gay men, 3% of bisexuals and 9% of trans people had experienced sexual assault. 76% of these survivors had experienced suicidal ideation and 41% had attempted suicide. 25% of survivors of abuse perpetrated by someone close to them reported feeling excluded/uncomfortable using mainstream services because of their sexuality. 70% of survivors of abuse perpetrated by someone close to them wanted an LGBT-specific service providing support and counselling.

Data from other sources also indicate that there are significant numbers of LGBT individuals being affected by sexual violence. The Brighton & Hove LGBT Switchboard (2008-10) reported that 15% of their counselling clients had disclosed some form of sexual violence. A Barnardos report in 2007 indicated that young gay migrants entering the city are vulnerable to sexual exploitation through homelessness. Lastly a 2007 Stonewall report indicated that 12% of LGB secondary school pupils who responded had experienced sexual assault at school.

The experience of LGBT sexual violence is dependent on a number of factors; how the victim perceives the incident which has happened to them, how an individual can access support services as well as the initial support provided when a victim first discloses

sexual violence. A number of support issues for LGBT individuals have been identified and need exploring further. These support issues have been identified from recommendations from the Count Me In Too projects, from some of the focus groups which have happened in the city, from what is known locally to have occurred for LGBT individuals as well as from feedback from the Domestic Violence Forum and other related working groups in the city. One LGBT issue which needs to be addressed in relation to the SARC is how forensic information is held as well as how the links with counselling services is developed to ensure that service providers are Brighton and Hove based and able to offer services sensitive to LGBT issues.

- 8.6b It was noted that in the Stern Report reference was made to the importance of forensic data being held in a confidential and anonymous setting so that individuals can make an informed decision as to whether they wish to report an incident. Most cases of sexual violence are very complex and if a report is made through the police then police procedures will be followed and the victim will be encouraged to officially report an incident. According to the Stern Report, however, the boundaries surrounding who should hold forensic data until an official report is made is explored and the Stern Report recommends that forensic nurse should hold forensic information until such a time as the victim has given their permission for it to be passed on to the police. In incidents where a serial perpetrator is thought to have been involved then these boundaries surrounding access to forensic information need to be very carefully thought through.
- 8.6c The panel heard that there are teething problems with the SARC at the moment, for example, the SARC has not yet contacted the LGBT switchboard to establish a referral pathway for LGBT victims. Due to the vulnerability of this particular client group their needs must be anticipated and yet, currently, they are not. Support services should not de-generalise or de-sexualise their clients but need to offer support inline with the needs of their clients. It is very important that thought is put into how LGBT individuals think about and experience sexual violence and the different pathways that they may need access too, to gain support. LGBT individuals shouldn't have to travel through a system arguing as to why they are not heterosexual. Services need to be LGBT affirmative from the beginning and what it means to be LGBT affirmative needs to be considered.

Within Brighton and Hove there are services which have specialised knowledge about sexual violence and there are services which have specialised knowledge about LGBT issues, these services need to learn from each other. Referral pathways need to be set up between services so clients can be referred to the specialised services they require but generic services need to learn how to be LGBT affirmative. Additionally, LGBT services need to learn more about domestic and sexual violence and how it affects their client group.

LGBT individuals will report that they can experience sexual violence in a number of ways and that it can be in association with homophobia. Like other individuals those who identify as LGBT are likely to suffer from multiple marginalisation which can mean that they have a number of additional issues, such as mental health issues, which they need support with as well as dealing with the sexual violence they have experienced. However, it is often the case that the more layering of issues a client produces the more vulnerable and potentially excluded from services they are likely to be. The police are not sensitive towards issues such as mental health issues and disabled issues, and the multiple marginalisation which LGBT survivors experience; the assumption is that

another service will be dealing with these other issues. These gaps need to be identified and filled in order to support vulnerable clients in the city, and this will only be achieved through working in partnership.

- 8.6d It was noted that some studies appear to show a correlation between those who are HIV positive and an increased chance of having experienced sexual abuse or assault from a partner.
- 8.6e The panel heard that there is a lot of work which needs to be done to support vulnerable LGBT clients in the city. However, the LGBT DV&A Working group is not receiving the funding to do this work, yet it is resource intensive. The CDRP has identified some money to enable the working group to do some work around community safety; it is not, however, enough. The working group needs to be provided with some funds to enable the costs of hosting meetings and writing minutes and other infrastructure costs to be met. If the council wants consortium working to work then they need to fund it.
- 8.6f Members of the panel noted that it was important that they were told what is being funded and what isn't, and that there may be the need for a co-ordinator post to oversee some of the strategic work on the issue of sexual violence.
- 8.6g It was noted that if the council and its partners wanted consortium working around this issue then they need to be funding the consortiums to do this work.
- 8.6h Members of the panel asked whether core funding was needed to tackle sexual violence.
- 8.6i The panel heard that core funding would be ideal, but more important is to develop integrated services so that people are not passed around from service to service. As well as ongoing funding of services thought needs to be put into how the council and its partners fund consortium development. For example, funding for the Inspire Project will end in March 2011, after that some of that work will need to be mainstreamed; thought needs to be put in now to what happens to the rest of that work. This is the case for many other projects and forums in the city. More thought needs to go into how projects are supported and sustained across the statutory sector and the business sector.
- 8.6j Members of the panel noted that if voluntary organisations work in partnership then they will be more likely to attract funding.
- 8.6k The panel heard that this was the case, but there is a lot of work which could be done in the city to support organisations to work as a consortium. Funders, in the current financial climate, will be far pickier about what projects they fund. Public sector agencies can help the third sector by being far clearer when commissioning services about what their priorities are and about what kind of provider they are looking to commission is. Third sector organisations need clarity over what is wanted from them. More work needs to be done by public sector agencies to support consortium development and working.
- 8.6l It was noted that there are many people that are falling through the gaps; men, women, and those from the LGBT community. Straight men on the street in terms of sexual violence are very under represented in the debate and there are no funding streams for this group out there.

8.7 The panel thanked all the speakers for attending the meeting to give evidence, and suggested that if there was further information and evidence which the speakers wished to share with the panel, then the panel would be happy to receive it.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

9.1 10 am – 12.00, 15 April in Committee Room 2, Hove Town Hall

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

10.1 There was none.

The meeting concluded at 4.25pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of