

Specialist Domestic Violence Courts Project Chris Corless November 2020 Update on Special Domestic Violence Courts (SDVC) project – November 2020

Approximately 100 court observations were made by 58 members of Midland Chase and Midland Arden in 7 Magistrates Courts where domestic abuse cases are heard across the area covered by West Midlands Police, Staffordshire Police and West Mercia Police. The observations were completed over a 9-week period ending on 6 March, all the questionnaires were submitted to the police electronically and the agreement is that the results will be analysed by the police and a report produced. However, as with many projects, progress has been delayed due to Covid-19.

West Midlands Police are arranging a 'thank you' and structured debrief meeting. This will take place on 19 November 2020 (originally scheduled for June 2020). One member from each club which took part has been invited to attend the virtual meeting and specific themes will be discussed. We will be notified of the themes in advance of the meeting so the member attending the meeting can gather the thoughts and opinions of the other members of her club who took part in the observations.

A recording of the meeting will be available in order that all observers can hear what was said. As noted above, a report and the analysis of questionnaires will be completed by police – nothing has been received so far but it is hoped that progress will be made after the debrief meeting.

Other Regions Dame Vera Baird has spoken about the SDVC project at a number of Region meetings and has received several requests from interested members for more information. These have all been followed up and further information and materials have been supplied to assist the Regions in deciding whether or not this is a project on which they could work. One Region is ready to start the project as soon as the courts are sitting again and a further 7 Regions have been sent additional information. Some are very keen to progress this once lockdown has eased.

Christine Corless