

Family violence soaring

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POLICE, who are being swamped with family violence cases in Manningham, are calling for more counselling services.

Officers say they have about 100 orders referred to them by courts each month, and are issuing at least one a day from their own investigations into violence in homes.

There are no counselling services for offenders in Manningham, and police and

welfare workers say local programs are urgently needed.

Manningham's chief welfare agency Doncare also wants a trial program at Heidelberg Magistrates' Court, which forces family violence offenders to attend counselling, to be expanded.

Doncaster Police domestic violence liaison officer Sgt Paul Saunders said his unit was called to a family violence case "at least once a day on average". Sgt Saunders said police would lobby local or state governments to set up offender counselling services in Man-

ningham. "What we are finding is that if people don't get any counselling or help to solve the triggers they have, then they could keep re-offending," Sgt Saunders said.

Doncare's clinical services' manager Carmel O'Brien said having a local offenders' counselling service could lead to more people getting help.

Ms O'Brien said some courts made offenders attend counselling and expanding this system to all courts could limit re-offending.

"It could push them to seek help that they

may not think they need," Ms O'Brien said.

Department of Justice acting courts communication manager Natalie Staaks said the state's pilot programs for family violence court sessions at Heidelberg and Ballarat, which allow magistrates to send guilty men to counselling, were under review.

"The Government will use the review to determine how to develop the court programs, including whether, and how, to expand them to other parts of the state," Ms Staaks said.

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