BOROUGH OF POOLE

RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

PROTOCOL FOR EMPLOYEES

Domestic violence is usually defined as physical, emotional, sexual abuse and other abuse of a person by someone with whom they have or have had some form of intimate relationship such as marriage, in order to maintain power and control over that person.

Domestic violence can affect anyone and occurs throughout society, irrespective of class, disability, race, culture or religion.

The impact of domestic violence on those individuals who experience it and other family members such as children must not be underestimated. The risk of long term psychological and emotional damage as a result of experiencing or witnessing domestic violence must not be overlooked.

There is a commitment within the Borough to employees developing a knowledge and awareness of the issues relating to domestic violence and of how to respond appropriately and access support on behalf of anyone experiencing domestic violence.

Co-operation and clear communication between units and agencies and recognition of each other's responsibilities are essential to ensure a sensitive and effective response to domestic violence. It is important that staff appreciate the support and services they are responsible for delivering and the point at which it is appropriate to transfer responsibility to another agency.

An anti-discriminatory approach is integral to all aspects of this protocol in line with the Borough of Poole core values and managing diversity policies.

Key Principles in Response to Domestic Violence

If an employee is aware that a member of the public with whom they are in contact is experiencing domestic violence the following key principles should be observed:-

1. Any report of domestic violence should be taken seriously and the potential danger of further violence appreciated. Never under-estimate the extent of the actual violence which may be occurring. Remember proof of violence may not always be available. Priority must be given to consideration of any necessary safeguards to protect those who may be directly or indirectly affected by the violence.

2. The provision of sensitive and accurate advice, information and support is essential to ensure that anyone whose safety is at risk can make informed decisions about what action to take to promote the safety and well being of themselves and their family and where to seek further assistance and services.

3. **CONFIDENTIALITY** is a key issue in dealing with domestic violence.

   (i) It is important that anyone who has experienced domestic violence knows that any information they give including their whereabouts will be treated as confidential.

   (ii) It is vital that when an individual reports domestic violence that they are clear that the information they are sharing will be treated with sensitivity and in confidence.

   (iii) It is important that information about an individuals' circumstances is only shared with their consent .

   However, all employees have an obligation to exchange information with professional staff from other units and agencies who have a responsibility for ensuring the protection of children, if they have reason to believe a child(ren) may be at risk and in need of protection.

   It is important to make it clear to any individual sharing information about domestic violence that confidentiality may not be maintained if the withholding of the information will prejudice the welfare of a child(ren).

4. Any individual reporting domestic violence must feel that it is their decision what they do next. Act only with the person's consent. There are however exceptional circumstances, as in the case of child protection when it may be considered appropriate to act without the consent of the individual concerned.

5. It is essential that employees have a non judgmental approach to those experiencing domestic violence. Be prepared to provide the same standard of professional help if an individual seeks assistance on future occasions, irrespective of how many times that help has been offered in the past.

6. Consideration needs to be given to how, where and to whom information or reports of domestic violence are made. The provision of a same sex interviewer or advisor should be facilitated.

Key actions in response to information or reports of domestic violence

1. Your line manager is available for consultation in response to a situation or concern which has come to your attention.

2. Ensure that information or advice to a member of the public is easily accessible and comprehensive, in order to ensure that the recipient of the information can make informed decisions about appropriate action to take. The leaflet *'Domestic Violence'* produced by East Dorset Domestic Violence Forum provides a comprehensive list of local and national contacts and is available within each service unit. Additional copies can be obtained from Children and Families Social Services.

3. Before a referral in respect of issues arising from a domestic violence situation is made ensure that the person concerned is willing to be referred to another service unit or agency and is aware of the issues relating to confidentiality.

4. Be aware of how to refer to appropriate services. Details of the advice and services available from service units within the borough is attached to the protocol.

5. Reports of domestic violence where there is reason to believe that a child may be at risk must be referred to Children and Families Services.

6. There may be occasions when concerns about domestic violence are reported by a person other than the victim of the violence. Information made available by a third party should be shared with your line manager in order to determine the appropriate response. Managers are encouraged to consult with their counterparts in service units with key responsibilities in respect of domestic violence as appropriate.

Advice and assistance available in respect of domestic violence from Borough of Poole Service Units

General Housing **Contact: 01202 633805**

The following services are available to clients:

- a confidential interview
- same sex advisor
- advice about rights to property
- advice about family law and injunctions
- details of local solicitors
- temporary accommodation in certain cases
- referral to a women's refuge
- liaison with other Units and agencies as appropriate
- 24 hour service

Housing Management Services (Council Tenants) **Contact: 01202 633800**

The following services are available to clients:

- a confidential interview
- advice regarding tenancy matters and rights of victims
- advice regarding action that can be taken, such as future housing
- liaison with other Units and agencies as appropriate
- repairs to damaged property and additional support

Support and protection through the 'Life-line' service is available to all residents of Poole.

Adult Social Services (Commissioning Unit)

Contact:

01202 633868, 633869, 633870 during office hours
01202 668123 outside office hours

The unit provides:

- Information/help desk facility.
- An assessment of social needs and support services to vulnerable adults who may have a disability, mental illness or who are elderly. This would include discussion the colleagues in Children and Families if there are child protection issues.
- Advice, liaison and referral (with the permission of the individual concerned) to appropriate resources.

- Out of hours service for advice/information.

Children and Families Social Services

Contact:

01202 735046 during office hours
01202 668123 outside office hours

- A confidential telephone contact or interview with a duty social worker during office hours.
- An Emergency Duty Service out of office hours, for advice and support.
- A safe environment for carer's and children during interviews.
- Advice on legal services, housing services, referral to women's refuge and other support services.
- Transport to safe locations.
- Advice on child care legislation and child protection procedures when appropriate.
- Liaison with other agencies to access therapeutic and counselling support for victims, their families and perpetrators of violence.
- Practical support to enable those experiencing domestic violence and their families to access support.
- In appropriate situations an allocated social worker to give ongoing advice and support.

Pupil and Parent Support **Contact: 01202 261900**

The following services are available to clients.

- General support and advice to schools in dealing with pupils who are affected by domestic violence.
- Direct support and advice to pupils who are referred by schools focusing on attendance and welfare issues that affect progress at school.

Personnel and Training Services **Contact: 01202 633452**

This Unit provides:

- Training and development services to equip employees with the skills to manage reports of domestic violence incidents
- Counselling and support through an Employee Welfare Service to employees
- Health and safety guidance to employees
- Occupational health services for employees