

22 March 2011

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# **Department of Neighbourhood and Planning**

## **Domestic Abuse Policy**

**Director of Housing  
Wiltshire Council Housing Services  
Department of Neighbourhood and Planning  
P.O. Box 2281 Salisbury Wiltshire SP1 2HX**

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**Please read this document carefully and retain it for future reference**

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## **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 This document sets out the housing policy for people in need of housing services as a result of domestic abuse. In developing the policy, account has been taken of the council's 'Domestic Abuse Strategy 2009-2011', which states that in implementing cross-cutting objectives the council will deliver services to help reduce abuse, including domestic abuse, and that housing will be an effective partner in finding multi-agency community safety solutions.

## **2.0 Aims of the policy**

2.1 The policy aims to:

- provide an accessible service that supplies clear and relevant information
- ensure all staff are trained and provided with appropriate support to enable them to deal with domestic abuse in an effective and sympathetic way
- ensure that housing works closely with other agencies
- encourage and maintain joint working where appropriate
- Ensure that all allegations of domestic abuse are treated seriously, ensuring that officers offer options and choice and do not make judgements
- Ensure that our response to domestic abuse meets the needs of everyone irrespective of age, gender, race, class, culture, sexuality or disability
- Ensure that services are monitored and that action is taken to continually make improvements to the service

## **3.0 Scope**

3.1 This policy has been developed to cover services provided by housing management, housing options and Homes4Wiltshire. Clear and consistent standards can be set by providing one policy for households at risk of domestic abuse.

3.2 Registered social landlords operating within Wiltshire have their own domestic abuse policies and will refer cases to the housing options team when required.

## **4.0 Equality and diversity**

4.1 Domestic abuse occurs across society, regardless of age, gender, race, marital status, sexuality, religion, disability, wealth, geographical location, academic achievement or educational ability. The incidents can occur at any stage of a relationship, may escalate in frequency and severity, and may continue after the relationship has ended. Although men can be the victims of domestic abuse, the evidence of reported incidents shows that it is predominately perpetrated by men against women who have been, or who are in, an intimate relationship. The second largest category of victims is men in homosexual relationships.

4.2 This policy complies with the council's Equality and Diversity Policy that sets out the council's commitment to recognising diversity and providing services that take account of these issues.

4.3 Information can be made available in other formats on request.

4.4 A full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out and is attached in Appendix 4.

## 4.5 Barriers to support and assistance

It is difficult for most women to leave abusive situations but the experience of black and minority ethnic (BME) women's groups indicates that BME women can take longer to leave. This may be because women from BME communities, particularly those subject to immigration control, face additional barriers when attempting to escape domestic abuse.

The following is a list of some barriers that may confront BME individuals. These are not exhaustive and may equally apply to other people:

- Guilt, shame, confusion, lack of confidence, low self-esteem and uncertainty.
- Fear of not being believed or supported by family, community or wider society.
- Religious and cultural pressures, such as notions of *shame* and *family honour or dishonour*; expectations to "suffer in silence" or accept domestic abuse as normal; the stigma of divorce/separation; pressure to reconcile and "save the marriage" at all costs; and hopes of changing violent behaviour.
- Social and racial isolation.
- Lack of English or language problems.
- Ignorance of rights and services.
- Fear of and experiences of racial harassment or discrimination.
- Fear of deportation.
- Fear of losing children to social services or to their partner and his family; or of being unable to provide for them.
- Inadequate services or responses from agencies, including failure to intervene and protect victims in the name of cultural sensitivity.
- Fear that agencies may be corrupt and unsympathetic.
- Homelessness
- Mental health issues (including post traumatic stress syndrome, depression, self-harm and other conditions - suicide statistics suggest that women in minority communities are more likely to turn to suicide and self-harm than to leave abusive situations).
- Other health needs
- Male victims, regardless of circumstance, often find it harder to seek help
- No recourse to public funds

## 5.0 Background

### 5.1 Definitions – what is domestic abuse

The government defines domestic abuse as:

Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.

(Home Office, Domestic Violence: A National Report, March 2004)

Wiltshire's policy refers to domestic 'abuse' in preference to domestic violence, in recognition that its impact can go beyond actual physical violence, to involve emotional abuse, the destruction of property, isolation from friends, family or sources of support, control over decision making, money, transport or telephone and can include the impact of witnessing abuse. Other local and national documents will refer to either domestic violence and/or domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse is a pattern of abusive and controlling behaviour through which the perpetrator seeks to exert power over the victim. Although the definition recognises adults as being 18 years or over, domestic abuse often overlaps with child abuse where children may witness and/or are victims of abuse.

The definition of domestic abuse is informed by research evidence and Home Office guidance that domestic abuse:

- is not a family argument or conflict between parents
- is a pattern of coercive behaviour used by one person to establish and maintain power and control over another
- is mainly perpetrated by men against women partners and women tend to experience more serious and fatal injuries and more repeat incidents of domestic abuse
- may also be perpetrated by women against male partners and can occur in same sex and transgender relationships.

Family members within and between the generations may also perpetrate domestic abuse. It includes abuse of the elderly and in specific minority ethnic communities it includes 'forced' marriage, female genital mutilation and so-called 'honour' based crimes and deaths.

## **5.2 Consequences of domestic abuse**

Domestic abuse can go beyond actual physical violence. It can also involve emotional abuse, the destruction of a spouse's or partner's property, their isolation from friends, family or other potential sources of support, control over access to money, personal items, food, transportation and the telephone, and stalking.

In some minority communities, domestic abuse can be perpetrated and/or condoned by the extended family. The victim may be accused of bringing dishonour to the family if they question or leave abusive and oppressive relationships. This often results in severe consequences such as social ostracism, sexual harassment and acts of abuse, including, in some cases, so called 'honour killings'.

Children and young people can experience harm when they live in a household affected by domestic abuse.

Guidance on support services, safeguarding and child protection will be covered in the procedures.

## **5.3 Some Facts about domestic abuse**

The National Context<sup>1</sup>

One incident of domestic abuse is reported to the police every minute across England and Wales

Estimates suggest that one in four women and one in six men will be a victim of domestic abuse in their lifetime

A woman will, on average, be assaulted by her partner or ex-partner 35 times before reporting it to the police.

Women usually have to contact 5–12 different agencies before they are able to leave a violent/abusive relationship.

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<sup>1</sup> *Wiltshire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2009-2011.*

## 5.4 The Wiltshire Context<sup>2</sup>

- 2,807 domestic abuse incidents were reported to Wiltshire Police in 2009/10.
- Only one in five incidents will be reported to the Police, therefore the level of domestic abuse experienced in Wiltshire is likely to be in the region of 14,000 incidents per year.
- Domestic abuse accounted for 14% of all violent crime reported to the Police in Wiltshire in 2009/10.
- Around 50% of cases referred to Wiltshire Council children and families' services are attributable to domestic abuse.
- Abuse within the household was the fourth highest priority cause of homelessness in Wiltshire in 2009/10.
- More than 6,500 children in Wiltshire (including Swindon) were present in the household during 2009/10 when a domestic abuse incident was taking place.

## 5.5 Evidence base

Appendix 2 provides details of the evidence base on which this policy has been based.

## 5.6 Links with other strategies

This policy will seek to fit within the council's overarching "Domestic Abuse Strategy 2009-11" (Appendix 1). Future work will reflect the necessity of prevention and early intervention to reduce further harm, as well as the provision and accessibility to support and enhancing confidence in bringing perpetrators to justice.

Domestic abuse cannot be tackled in isolation and a co-ordinated partnership approach is essential. This will involve working together to prevent, intervene and reduce the impact of domestic abuse, increasing the safety and well being of those living with its effects in Wiltshire.

Appendix 6 sets out the sources that the policy has drawn upon and the links with other strategies and policies.

## 5.7 Legal remedies

A summary of some of the legal remedies is attached in Appendix 3.

## 6. The policy

This policy has been produced in partnership with other council departments and agencies. We will aim to continue to work in partnership to improve the services that we provide to our customers whilst respecting confidentiality.

Staff will also work closely with other agencies where appropriate and will assist with referrals to other agencies. This includes contacting other organisations who are able to provide support, assisting with housing benefit claims or referrals to the police. We will only make referrals with the agreement of the customer, unless there is a concern for the safety of a child or a vulnerable adult.

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<sup>2</sup> Wiltshire Police, *Domestic Violence Update on Performance 2009/10*; and Wiltshire LA P1E Homelessness Returns, 2009/10.

Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) are organised to provide a multi-agency response to cases that are considered to be high risk. This policy will therefore ensure that MARAC guidance and procedures are followed. Staff will be trained in carrying out risk assessments to identify when cases should be referred to MARAC.

As well as organising conferences to discuss individual cases, MARAC also provide a forum for agencies to meet to share skills and knowledge and to look at ways in which services can be improved.

### **6.1 The responsibilities of Wiltshire Council**

The officer dealing with any case involving domestic abuse will:

- provide information on advice and support available both within the council and externally
- discuss the available options with the customer, taking a victim centred approach
- follow the staff procedures and guidance set out to implement the policy
- keep accurate and up to date records
- offer an interview with an officer of the same sex
- provide a confidential and sensitive service
- establish if there are any special needs that should be taken into account, for example the need for an interpreter or a sign language translator
- conduct interviews in private and if necessary in a place of safety
- refer cases involving child protection or vulnerable adults to the relevant services in line with the referral procedures
- make recommendations for a management transfer when appropriate.

### **6.2 The provision of clear and accessible information**

The policy will be made available at council offices and on the council's website.

### **6.3 Recording**

The standard MARAC monitoring form will be used by all housing staff and external agencies handling domestic abuse cases. This will ensure consistency across services.

### **6.4 Provision of accommodation and homelessness**

As part of the procedure for assisting victims of domestic abuse, staff must assess the risk to the victim and the options available to the individual at the time. This may include providing assistance to enable the victim to remain in their current home through the use of mediation, legal remedies or the Sanctuary scheme. There may be occasions when the victim is unable to remain in the property and alternative accommodation such as a safe house or emergency temporary accommodation will need to be secured to allow the housing options team and other housing teams to offer advice and assistance and consider all the options available. This may include providing support to enable the victim to return if the appropriate safety measures have been put in place; or assisting the victim to make a homelessness application if the victim is unable to return or remain in their home once other options to prevent homelessness have been exhausted.

Homes4Wiltshire is the Wiltshire-wide system for allocating social housing owned by Wiltshire Council and other social landlords operating in the council area. It operates a choice-based lettings policy which is available to view on the website - <http://www.homes4wiltshire.co.uk>

The policy states that:

“Additional preference can also be given to people with an urgent housing need, such as victims of domestic abuse, racial harassment, witnesses of crime and victims of crime at risk of intimidation amounting to violence and people with urgent medical reasons.”

## **6.5 Remedies and Initiatives to remain at home**

### **The Sanctuary Scheme**

The Sanctuary Scheme is a victim-centred initiative and an innovative approach to homelessness prevention. The Sanctuary Scheme is designed to enable victims of domestic abuse to remain in their own accommodation, where it is safe for them to do so, where it is their choice and where the perpetrator does not live in the accommodation. If a victim feels compelled to move then the disruption to family and other support networks, education and employment can sometimes lead to homelessness. See Appendix 5

### **Repairs and security improvements for council tenants**

Where there is an established risk to someone from domestic abuse, the council will fit a new lock or other security arrangements without charge. This may include pursuing the Sanctuary Scheme. Where damage has occurred as a result of domestic abuse the victim would not normally be re-charged for the repair. However, attempts may be made to recover the costs from the perpetrator.

### **Legal options**

There are legal procedures which seek to protect men and women from violent partners and allow them to remain in their own homes. These include occupation orders and non-molestation orders. Victims would always be advised to seek legal advice when considering these options.

### **The tenancy agreement**

The council's current tenancy agreement does not contain a specific clause regarding domestic abuse, although abuse can be grounds for possession under section 2a of the schedule to the Housing Act 1985 as amended. The council is committed to including a specific clause in its tenancy agreement when it is next updated, making domestic abuse a breach of tenancy conditions, and in the meantime will make use of section 2a of the Housing Act when appropriate.

## **7. Wiltshire Council tenants**

Where tenants or members of their household experience domestic abuse, the Neighbourhood Manager will provide advice and assistance. A brief summary of the approach to be adopted under this policy is listed under the following headings:

**Arrears** – The safety of victims should be the over-riding priority. In many cases a repayment agreement can be a way of protecting the victim while safeguarding the debt owed to a landlord.

As a last resort, arrears may be written off, however the general rule will be to recover arrears. Each case will be assessed on an individual basis.

**Re-housing** – The Homes4Wiltshire policy makes provision, subject to an assessment, for additional preference to be given to victims of domestic abuse, and the increased priority under the banding may permit an urgent transfer to take place. There is also the provision for a management transfer to be carried out and housing management will consider a transfer after taking into account the details of individuals' circumstances. Housing options will discuss the homelessness process and provide housing advice and assistance where appropriate, but all efforts to prevent homelessness and source alternative and safe options will be pursued before considering homelessness.

**Joint tenancies** – Where there are joint tenants, either party can give notice and terminate the tenancy. In situations where domestic abuse is the grounds for wishing to terminate the tenancy, both parties should be advised to seek legal advice, and also to contact the housing options team for advice and assistance.

**Where the perpetrator is the sole tenant** – Where the perpetrator is the sole tenant, the council can use ground 2a of schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985 as amended to seek possession, although a careful review of the evidence and consequences will be required.

**Where the victim is the sole tenant** – where the victim is a sole tenant they may need advice about legal remedies or the Sanctuary Scheme. This will be provided by their Neighbourhood Manager, who will contact the housing options team to discuss the option of sanctuary, or a move using the Homes4Wiltshire scheme, for example via a "management transfer", or suitable alternative accommodation and the process of giving notice, although consideration should be given to the Sanctuary Scheme or to the behaviour modification programme for the offender rather than immediately assuming that a move is the best course of action.

## **8. Arrears situation for other landlords**

All eligible applicants will be considered for suitable accommodation through Homes 4 Wiltshire, including applicants who have an outstanding housing-related debt (current or previous) to any landlord (private or social) or who have a history of anti-social behaviour.

Applicants with current or previous housing-related debt to the landlord, however, will be required to maintain a consistent repayment plan. Applicants who fail to do this may be overlooked by the landlord under their own Allocations Policy.

## **9. Consultation**

The following organisations were consulted in preparing this policy and a multi-agency group was set up to develop the policy.

Salisbury Refuge  
North Wiltshire Womens' Refuges  
Splitz  
Wiltshire Police  
Knightstone Housing Refuge  
Salisbury Refuge  
Wiltshire Council Domestic Abuse Reduction Co-ordinator  
Wiltshire Council Housing Options Section  
Wiltshire Council Housing Strategy Section  
Wiltshire Council Housing Management Section  
Wiltshire Council Equality and Diversity Section

Phoenix Group  
Community Mental Health Team  
Army Welfare Service  
Wiltshire Council Adult and Child Services  
Sarsen Housing Association  
Selwood Housing Association  
Anti-Social Behaviour Reduction Manager  
Community Safety Manager  
NHS Child and Adult Safeguarding Leads  
Youth Offending Team  
Domestic Abuse Reduce Group (DARG)  
Victim Support  
Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) Service  
Wiltshire Council Legal Team  
Wiltshire Racial Equality Council  
Community 4

## **10. Monitoring**

Each section in housing services that has any involvement with cases of domestic abuse will keep its own records, however these will be co-ordinated with the council's Domestic Abuse Reduction Officer and the Police Domestic Abuse Unit. It is important that any trends are identified and responded to, and also that profiling of victims can take place and be analysed. The anonymous records will be shared with the Domestic Abuse Reduction Group (DARG) as part of the strategic approach to tackle domestic abuse in Wiltshire.

## **11. Review**

11.1 The Domestic Abuse Policy will be reviewed by the Domestic Abuse Forum and Wiltshire Council every year.

11.2 Any new legislation, best practice or guidance may be introduced into policy and procedure before any timetabled review.

## **Useful reading**

- Wiltshire Council Domestic Abuse Strategy 2009-11
- MARAC (Multi-agency risk assessment conference) service user explanatory booklet

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Wiltshire Council Domestic Abuse Strategy  
Appendix 2 – Evidence base  
Appendix 3 – Legal remedies  
Appendix 4 – Equality Impact Assessment  
Appendix 5 - Sanctuary Scheme  
Appendix 6 - Sources

## **Accessibility statement**

Information about Wiltshire Council services can be made available on request in other languages including BSL and formats such as large print and audio. Please contact the council by telephone 0300 456 0100, by text phone 01225 712500, or email [customerservices@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@wiltshire.gov.uk)

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## Appendix 1

### **Wiltshire Council Domestic Abuse Strategy**

**Please see separate document available on the council's website or available on request from [sonia.burgess@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:sonia.burgess@wiltshire.gov.uk)**

## **Evidence base**

### **National data:<sup>3</sup>**

- Domestic abuse accounts for 25% of all violent crime recorded across England and Wales
- 2 women are killed every week by a current or former partner
- Domestic abuse has the highest rate of repeat victimisation of any crime – 35% of households have a second incident within 5 weeks of the first
- One incident of domestic abuse is reported to the police every minute across England and Wales
- Estimates suggest that one in four women and one in six men will be a victim of domestic abuse in their lifetime
- Every year 1 million women experience at least one incident of domestic abuse – nearly 20,000 women a week.

### **Prevalence of domestic abuse in Wiltshire:<sup>4</sup>**

- 2,807 domestic abuse incidents were reported to Wiltshire Police in 2009/10.
- Only one in five incidents will be reported to the Police, therefore the level of domestic abuse experienced in Wiltshire can be estimated to be in the region of 14,000 incidents per year.
- The repeat victimisation rate in 2009/10 was 27.1%.
- Domestic abuse accounted for 14% of all violent crime reported to the Police in Wiltshire (2009/10)
- In excess of 6,500 children were present in the household at the time of a domestic abuse incident being reported to the police in 2009/10 (data includes both Wiltshire and Swindon figures).
- Around 50% of cases referred to Wiltshire Council children and families' service are attributable to domestic abuse
- Wiltshire refuges and safehouses accommodated 121 women and 123 children in 2009/10.
- The minimum cost of dealing with domestic abuse in Wiltshire is £18.5 million per year
- Abuse within the household was the fourth highest priority cause of homelessness in Wiltshire in 2009/10.

### **Young people:**

#### **National data:<sup>5</sup>**

To date there is not a vast amount of research dedicated to domestic abuse and young people (16 and under) although over recent years at a national level there have been a small number of attitudinal surveys undertaken that have begun to explore young people's views about domestic abuse. The key results published from these pieces of research are summarised below:

- 4% of teenage girls were subjected to regular attacks by their partner.

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<sup>3</sup> *Wiltshire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2009-2011.*

<sup>4</sup> Wiltshire Police, *Domestic Violence Update on Performance 2009/10*; and Wiltshire LA P1E Homelessness Returns, 2009/10.

<sup>5</sup> *Sugar* magazine and NSPCC online survey 2005; *Teen Abuse Survey of Great Britain*

- 16% had been hit at least once.
- 31% thought that it was 'acceptable' for a boy to act in an aggressive way if his girlfriend has cheated on him.
- 6% of girls aged 13-19, with an average age of 15, had been forced to have sex with their boyfriend and 1 in 3 forgave him and stayed with him. (Source:.)

### **Young people in Wiltshire:**

Funding was secured from the Government Office South West (GOSW) in 2008/09 to carry out a survey of young people's attitudes to domestic abuse in Wiltshire in 2009. This was the first survey of this kind to be conducted in Wiltshire:

- Nearly a quarter of respondents believed that 'sometimes' abuse or violence was OK, with a small proportion, 1.4%, stating it was 'always' OK.
- A significantly larger proportion of male than female respondents thought that abuse/violence was 'sometimes' or 'always' OK, regardless of whether the abuse was from a man directed towards a woman or a woman towards a man and regardless of circumstance too.

### **Culture-specific forms of domestic abuse:**

#### **National data:<sup>6</sup>**

- An estimated 66,000 women in England and Wales in 2001 had been subjected to genital mutilation.
- There are no published statistics on numbers of 'honour' crimes in the UK, but it is widely quoted that there are around 12 honour murders a year.
- 'Honour' crimes usually occur within South Asian and Middle Eastern families. None of the world's major religions condone 'honour'-related crimes.
- The key factors are cultural and generational divisions, and the victim's refusal to obey a family's self-proclaimed code or rules.
- The government's Forced Marriage Unit deals with around 5,000 inquiries and 300 cases of forced marriage every year.
- About a third of these concern under-18s.
- Forced marriage is primarily an issue of abuse against women. Most cases involve young women and girls aged between 13 and 30 years, but around 15% of victims in cases reported to the FMU each year are men.
- Forced marriage is not a religious issue; every major faith condemns it and freely given consent is a prerequisite of Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh marriages.

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<sup>6</sup> FCO-Home Office, Forced Marriage Unit.

## **Relevant legislation**

This list is not exhaustive and is for reference only.

### **Protection from Harassment Act 1997**

The Protection from Harassment Act introduced new powers to address all types of harassment, which could include domestic abuse. There are two main offences in the Act, the offence of harassment, and the offence of putting people in fear of violence, sometimes called “aggravated harassment”. As well as enabling criminal proceedings under the Act, it is possible for victims to take civil action in respect of harassment. This is a useful Act for a victim of domestic abuse to obtain an order preventing further harassment.

### **The Housing Act 1985 & 1996**

Eviction for domestic abuse may be achieved under three different grounds in Schedule 2 of the 1985 Act:

- Ground 1 covers breaches of the tenancy agreement and Ground 2A is specifically for domestic abuse where the victim has left as a result.
- Ground 2 may also be relevant where domestic abuse involves nuisance or annoyance to people other than those living in the home and/or where a criminal offence involves nuisance or annoyance and/or certain convictions.

The Housing Act 1996 Part 7 states that it is not reasonable for a person to continue to occupy accommodation where it is probable that this would lead to domestic abuse against her/him or their family.

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 replaced sections 152 and 153 of the 1996 Housing Act with new powers as described below.

### **Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003**

Under the Act an injunction can be obtained against a person who is causing nuisance and annoyance to anyone living in local authority or registered social landlord (RSL) housing.

If there is proof of abuse and a risk of harm, the court may attach a power of arrest and may exclude the defendant from his or her home. Injunctions are still available to prevent breaches of tenancy agreements.

There is a power under the Act to demote a secure assured tenancy, which in the case of domestic abuse would be similar to a possession order suspended on behavioural terms.

### **Family Law Act 1996**

Injunctions (non molestation orders) under this Act prevent an associated person from harassing another and the Act also makes provision for occupation orders, which regulate how and who can occupy a property. These can be obtained by victims directly under civil law. Where a joint tenancy or joint ownership occurs, matrimonial home rights under the Family Law Act can protect rights.

### **The Human Rights Act 1998**

Under this Act a victim suffering an abuse of one of the human rights by a relevant organisation will be entitled to complain to a court of law in the UK and could seek compensation. Individuals (such as the perpetrator/s of domestic abuse) cannot be sued for breaches of human rights, but the practices of RSLs can be challenged on the basis that they are incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights.

### **Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

This Act has the reduction of domestic abuse as one of its key objectives, monitored by a multi-agency domestic abuse task group. Section 17 places a duty on local authorities to take into account crime and disorder in everything they do.

### **Children Act 1989**

This Act places a general duty on local authorities to provide a range of services to promote the welfare of children and to support families to enable them to care for their children.

### **NHS and Community Care Act 1990**

This Act ensures that local authorities have a responsibility to support the most vulnerable people within society.

### **Local Government Act 2000**

This Act contains a duty to promote social and economic well-being.

### **Adoption and Children Act 2002**

Section 120 of this Act clarifies the definition of harm in the Children Act 1989 to make it clear that the harm a child may be at risk of suffering includes any impairment of the child's health or development as a result of witnessing the ill-treatment of another person.

Other relevant legislation includes:

- Chronically Sick and Disabled Person(amended) 1976
- Act Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their families, Department of Health
- Supporting People Legislation
- Data Protection Act 1998

Note – Wiltshire is one of three areas taking part in trials starting in summer 2011 of the new proposed “Go orders” People suspected of abusing a partner can be banned from their homes for up to four weeks. The proposed "go orders" can be used even if there is not enough evidence to charge a suspect.

## **Equality Impact Assessment Domestic Abuse Policy (Housing)**

### **Step 1– scoping the equality impact assessment (EIA)**

<b>1.1. Name of the strategy / policy / procedure / practice</b>
Domestic Abuse Policy (Housing)
<b>1.2. What are the main aims, purpose and outcomes of strategy / policy / procedure / practice and how does it fit in with the wider aims of the organisation?</b>
<p>The policy aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop an accessible service that provides clear and relevant information</li><li>• Ensure all staff are trained and provided with adequate support to enable them to deal with domestic abuse in an effective and sympathetic way.</li><li>• Develop clear procedures and guidance for staff</li><li>• Develop clear service standards</li><li>• Ensure that housing works closely with other agencies</li><li>• Encourage and maintain joint working where appropriate</li><li>• Develop a victim centred approach</li><li>• Ensure that all allegations of domestic abuse are treated seriously, ensuring that officers offer options and choice and do not make judgements</li><li>• Ensure that our response to domestic abuse meets the needs of everyone irrespective of age, gender, race, class, culture, sexuality or disability.</li><li>• Ensure that services are monitored and that action is taken to continually make improvements to the service.</li></ul> <p>These aims fit into the following organisational goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• High quality, low cost, customer-focused services;</li><li>• Local, open, transparent decision-making;</li><li>• Working together to support Wiltshire’s communities, building social capital;</li><li>• Being inclusive and supporting others.</li></ul>
<b>1.3. List the main activities relating to the strategy / policy / procedure / practice and identify who is likely to benefit from it</b>
<p>1. To develop a service and response to incidents of alleged domestic abuse regardless of housing tenure, that is accessible, provides clear and relevant information, appropriate support and helpful advice to any tenant, in a consistent and sensitive manner.</p> <p>2. To treat all allegations of domestic abuse seriously ensuring officers offer options and choice and do not make judgements.</p> <p>3. To continuously improve the quality of the service and responses given to any Wiltshire residents suffering domestic abuse.</p>

4. To develop partnerships actively with other organisations that can assist people who are suffering from domestic abuse. To encourage and maintain joint working where appropriate.
5. To actively promote a greater understanding of the issues surrounding domestic abuse.
6. To act as a support mechanism to victims of domestic abuse by contacting and liaising with other agencies.
7. To ensure that our response to domestic abuse meets the needs of all tenants irrespective of age, gender, race class, culture, sexuality or disability.
8. To seek to alleviate any financial hardship suffered by victims of domestic abuse through signposting to advice on debt or benefit entitlement.
9. To ensure residents are aware that Wiltshire Council will respond sensitively, quickly and effectively to any cases of alleged domestic abuse.
10. To ensure all officers are trained to deal with domestic abuse in an effective, sympathetic way, keeping up to date with legislation, guidance and Best Practice.

The Policy provides for a co-ordinated response to reports and incidents of domestic abuse across Wiltshire Council housing directorate, which comprises the housing options, housing strategy & support, housing management, new housing, private sector housing, and homes4wiltshire services and teams. As such, the intended beneficiaries of the Policy are both Wiltshire Council housing staff, through the provision of guidelines and procedures in dealing with cases of domestic abuse, and all residents of Wiltshire (irrespective of type of housing tenure) who may benefit from the provision of the same.

**What do you already know about the relevance of the strategy / policy / procedure / practice?  
What are the main issues you need to consider?**

Some things to consider:

- How is the policy likely to affect the promotion of equality in the areas of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or human rights?
- How do you think that the policy will meet the needs of different communities and groups?
- What consultation has already been undertaken which is relevant to the development of this policy?
- Are there any examples of existing good practice in this area – such as measures to improve access to the policy among particular groups?
- Do you think that your policy presents any problems or barriers to any community or group?

**1.4. What data, research and other evidence or information is available which will be relevant to this EIA?**

The Domestic Abuse Policy (Housing) replaces the 2009 Domestic Violence Policy (Housing Management) and provides for a co-ordinated response to reports of domestic abuse from across the housing directorate. It links with the council's "Domestic Abuse Strategy 2009-2011" and draws on consultation carried out for this Strategy, recognising the duty to promote equality and diversity in the method, quality and style of service delivery.

The Policy is intended to meet the needs of different communities and groups and provides procedures for, and staff training in, dealing with areas of cultural sensitivity related to domestic abuse.

**1.5. What further data or information do you need to carry out the assessment?**

See 3.3

## Step 2 – Involvement, Consultation and Partnerships

<b>2.1.</b>	
<b>Equality target group</b>	<b>Briefly describe what you did, with whom, when and where. Please provide a brief summary of the responses gained and links to relevant documents, as well as any actions.</b>
<b>Age</b>	Youth Offending Team; NHS Child And Adult Safeguarding Leads; Wiltshire Council Adult and Child Services
<b>Disability</b>	Community mental health team
<b>Gender</b>	
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	
<b>Race</b>	Wiltshire Racial Equality Council
<b>Religion or belief</b>	Wiltshire Racial Equality Council
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	
<b>Human rights</b>	
<b>Other</b>	

<b>2.2. If consultation and involvement of specific groups did not take place, please state why</b>
Consultation with equality target groups will be carried out during the main consultation on the Policy

<b>2.3. What do previous consultations show about the potential take-up of any resulting activities or services?</b>
n/a

<b>2.4. How are external partners involved, or how do you are intend to involve external partners, in delivering the aims of this strategy / policy / procedure / practice? (if applicable)</b>
<p>While bearing in mind the need for confidentiality, if domestic abuse is to be tackled effectively there is also a need to work with other agencies, for example in the establishment of case conferences and the more formal Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) approach.</p> <p>The Policy will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fulfil obligations in relation to the Council’s “Domestic Abuse Strategy 2009-2011” which states that in implementing cross cutting objectives the Council will deliver services to help reduce violence, including Domestic Abuse and other hate crimes and that housing will be an effective partner in finding multi-agency community safety solutions. The Wiltshire Community Safety Partnership Executive has the responsibility to reduce crime and disorder, including domestic abuse. This partnership will provide the overarching governance for the Wiltshire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2009-11, whilst recognising the role of the Wiltshire Criminal Justice Board and the Children’s Trust Board for which domestic abuse is a priority. Implementation and delivery of the strategy will be the responsibility of individual agencies through a joined-up approach. The partner agencies recognise their obligations to promote equality and diversity in the method, quality and style of service delivery.</li> <li>• Link also with the Council’s Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy, Wiltshire Council “Hidden Harm” Strategy 2010, ‘Together we can end violence against women and girls: a strategy’ HM Government, “Safe, Sensible Drinking – National Alcohol Strategy 2007” and “Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010)”</li> </ul>

**Existing consultees:**

Salisbury Refuge  
Chippenham Refuge  
Splitz  
Wiltshire Police  
Westlea Housing Refuge  
Knightstone Housing Refuge  
Salisbury Refuge  
Wiltshire Council Domestic Abuse Reduction Co-Ordinator  
Wiltshire Council Housing Options Section  
Wiltshire Council Housing Strategy Section  
Wiltshire Council Housing Management Section  
Wiltshire Council Equality and Diversity Section  
Phoenix Group  
Community Mental Health Team  
Army Welfare Service  
Wiltshire Council Adult and Child Services  
Sarsen Housing Association  
Selwood Housing Association  
Anti-Social Behaviour Reduction Manager  
Community Safety Manager  
NHS Child And Adult Safeguarding Leads  
Youth Offending Team  
Domestic Abuse Reduce Group (DARG)  
Victim Support  
Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) Service  
Wiltshire Council Legal Team  
Wiltshire Racial Equality Council  
Community 4

**Step 3 – data collection and evidence**

**3.1. What evidence or information do you already have about how this policy might affect equality, and what does this tell you?**

National research and evidence about domestic abuse is extensive and a comprehensive evidence base is provided as an appendix to the Policy. Summarised below is some of the key evidence relating to equality that has informed the development of the Policy:

**National data:**

- Domestic abuse accounts for 25% of all violent crime recorded across England and Wales
- 2 women are killed every week by a current or former partner
- Estimates suggest that one in four women and one in six men will be a victim of domestic abuse in their lifetime
- Every year 1 million women experience at least one incident of domestic abuse – nearly 20,000 women a week.

### Domestic abuse in Wiltshire:

- Domestic abuse accounted for 14% of all violent crime reported to the police in Wiltshire (2009/10)
- In excess of 6,500 children were present in the household at the time of a domestic abuse incident being reported to the police in 2009/10 (data includes both Wiltshire and Swindon figures).
- Wiltshire refuges and safehouses accommodated 121 women and 123 children in 2009/10.
- Ethnicity data (provided by Wiltshire Police):

Victim's ethnicity	09/10 Numbers	09/10 %age
Asian/Asian British	26	0.9
Black/Black British	53	1.9
Mixed	39	1.4
Other	0	0
White	2420	86.2
Not stated	257	9.2
Not complete	12	0.4

- The Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVA) service in Wiltshire works with victims of domestic abuse who have been assessed to be at high risk of further serious harm or domestic homicide. Last year (2009/10) there were 129 referrals to the service, of which:
  - 83% of clients were white British;
  - 3% of clients were men;
  - 9% of clients were identified as having a disability;
  - 1% of clients were LGBT;
  - 3% of clients were provided with support with immigration issues;
  - 16% of clients were supported with financial issues;
  - 16% of clients were supported with health / well-being issues.

### Culture-specific forms of domestic abuse:

#### National data:

- In 2001, an estimated 66,000 women in England and Wales had been subjected to genital mutilation.
- There are no published statistics on numbers of so-called 'honour' crimes in the UK, but it is widely quoted that there are around 12 'honour' murders a year.
  - 'Honour' crimes usually occur within South Asian and Middle Eastern families. None of the world's major religions condone 'honour'-related crimes.
  - The key factors are cultural and generational divisions, and the victim's refusal to obey a family's self-proclaimed code or rules.
- The government's Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) deals with 5,000 inquiries and 300 cases of forced marriage every year.
  - About a third of these concern under-18s.
  - Forced marriage is primarily an issue of violence against women. Most cases involve young women and girls aged between 13 and 30 years, but 15% of victims in cases reported to the FMU each year are men.
  - Forced marriage is not a religious issue; every major faith condemns it and freely given consent is a prerequisite of Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh marriages.

(Source: 'Together we can end violence against women and girls: a strategy' HM Government; 'Dealing with cases of forced marriage – guidelines for police'; Home affairs select committee).

**Wiltshire:**

The IDVA service in Wiltshire provided support to one client in 2009/10 over 'honour'-based domestic abuse.

**Young people:**

National data:

To date there is not a vast amount of research dedicated to domestic abuse and young people (16 and under) although over recent years at a national level there have been a small number of attitudinal surveys undertaken that have begun to explore young people's views about domestic abuse. The key results published from these pieces of research are summarised below:

- 4% of teenage girls were subjected to regular attacks by their partner.
- 16% had been hit at least once.
- 31% thought that it was 'acceptable' for a boy to act in an aggressive way if his girlfriend has cheated on him.
- 6% of girls aged 13-19, with an average age of 15, had been forced to have sex with their boyfriend and 1 in 3 forgave him and stayed with him.

(Source: Sugar magazine and NSPCC online survey 2005; Teen Abuse Survey of Great Britain.)

Young people in Wiltshire:

Funding was secured from the Government Office South West (GOSW) in 2008/09 to carry out a survey of young people's attitudes to domestic abuse in Wiltshire in 2009. This was the first survey of this kind to be conducted in Wiltshire:

- Nearly a quarter of respondents believed that 'sometimes' abuse or violence was OK with a small proportion, 1.4%, stating it was 'always' OK.
- A significantly larger proportion of male respondents than female respondents thought that abuse/violence was 'sometimes' or 'always' OK.

**3.2. What does available data tell you about the potential take-up of any resulting activities or services?**

Data from attitudinal surveys indicates that there are ongoing prejudices inhibiting the reporting of domestic abuse; and evidence from national and local monitoring indicates that the prevalence of domestic abuse in Wiltshire, as nationally, is extensive.

**3.3. What additional research or data is required to fill any gaps in your understanding of the potential or known effects of the strategy / policy / procedure / practice? Have you considered commissioning new data or research?**

There are gaps in our understanding of the local breakdowns on incidences of domestic abuse, in terms of the age, gender, disability, mental health status, sexual orientation and religion of both victims and perpetrators. These gaps inhibit our ability to properly target resources and the Policy therefore will implement the full monitoring of all reported cases of domestic abuse to the housing directorate, in order that we can achieve a better 'picture' of the local situation.<sup>4</sup>

#### Step 4 – Assessing impact and strengthening the strategy / policy / procedure / practice

What evidence do you have about how the strategy / policy / procedure / practice will affect different groups and communities in relation to equality and human rights?

##### **4.1. How does / will the strategy / policy / procedure / practice and resulting activities affect different communities and groups?**

Some things to consider:

- Is there any potential for, or known, adverse or positive impacts of the policy?
- You should consider how the policy might affect communities with small populations; people affected by discrimination in multiple areas of equality (age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation); specific interest groups such as small businesses, voluntary sector agencies and other service providers.
- Are there examples of good practice that can be built on?
- You may wish to consider how the policy will be delivered or communicated.

The Policy is intended to have a positive impact upon the lives of people affected by domestic abuse.

While acknowledging the sensitivity of this issue and the challenges to take-up of domestic abuse support services noted in section 5 of the EIA Screening (notably linguistic, asylum, cultural and financial barriers), the procedures implemented by this Policy are intended to reduce any potential adverse effects in dealing with domestic abuse by ensuring appropriate staff training and the provision of specialist support.

##### **4.2. What measures does, or could, the strategy / policy / procedure / practice include to help promote equality of opportunity?**

For example, positive measures designed to address disadvantage and reach different communities or groups?

The Policy provides procedures for the housing directorate's response to reports of domestic abuse, and aims to ensure that our response to domestic abuse meets the needs of all residents irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity, class, culture, sexual orientation and/or disability. While the Policy is intended as an internal document, it will be available in translation on request.

##### **4.3. What measures does, or could, the strategy / policy / procedure / practice include to address existing patterns of discrimination, harassment or disproportionately?**

In providing measures intended to improve the wellbeing and safety of victims of domestic abuse and those affected by domestic abuse (i.e. children), the Policy aims to address and improve existing patterns of harassment. We also note that domestic abuse is a pattern of abusive and controlling behaviour through which the perpetrator seeks to exert power over the victim; and the Policy aims to provide perpetrators of domestic abuse (convicted and non-convicted) with programmes that help them to understand their behaviour, provide alternative behaviour, while ensuring that they are held accountable for their actions.

##### **4.4. What impact will the strategy / policy / procedure / practice have on promoting good relations and wider community cohesion?**

Inasmuch as domestic abuse within a household may also have a negative impact upon neighbours, the Policy aims to promote good community relations through alleviating domestic abuse.

**4.5. If the strategy / policy / procedure / practice is likely to have a negative effect ('adverse impact'), what are the reasons for this?**

Consider and include comments on direct or indirect discrimination.

There is no evidence to suggest that this Policy will have an adverse impact.

While some media reports have claimed that certain forms of domestic abuse are 'culturally permitted', Wiltshire Council supports the insights of HM Government's 'Violence Against Women and Girls: A Strategy' and maintains absolutely that every individual has the right to live his or her life free from physical, mental, financial or sexual abuse by a member of their household. Wiltshire Council will take a victim-centred approach with individuals' safety as our primary concern.

**4.6. What practical changes will help reduce any adverse impact on particular groups?**

For example:

- Changes in communication methods, providing language support, collecting data, revising programmes or involvement activities.
- Have you considered our legal responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act, including treating disabled people more favourably where necessary?

There is no evidence to suggest that this Policy will have an adverse impact.

In order to monitor access to, and take up of, support services, monitoring data will be collected using the DASH risk assessment approach when a report of domestic abuse is made to a member of the housing directorate. Language support and same-sex interviewers will be made available as necessary.

**4.7. What evidence is there that actions to address any negative effects on one area of equality may affect other areas of equality or human rights?**

None.

**4.8. What will be done to improve access to, and take-up of, services or understanding of the policy / strategy / function or procedure?**

Some things to consider:

- Increasing awareness of the policy among staff.
- Reviewing your staffing profile to make sure you reach all parts of local communities.
- Encouraging wider public involvement in our work or communications activities.
- Encourage different groups, including disabled people, to get involved in what we do.

To improve understanding and use of the Policy guidelines, the following measures will be introduced:

1. Staff training and awareness-raising in dealing with reports of domestic abuse.
2. Procedures for the DASH risk assessments.
3. Training in and explanations of the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC), including information-sharing within the confines of confidentiality.
4. Monitoring of all reported incidences of domestic abuse.
5. Upholding of the Wiltshire LSCB Multi-Agency Protocol 5 ('Protection of children who experience domestic violence').
6. Pro-forma to ensure procedure is followed, incidents are recorded correctly and authorisations are shown.

Timescales - the most serious cases require urgent action and must be treated as a priority. The procedure sets out the timescales that officers are expected to follow and the Housing Services are committed to ensuring that these timescales are adhered to.

Please note that you may need to revisit this section once you have completed the policy development process.

## Step 5 – Procurement and Commissioning

<p><b>5.1. Consideration of external contractor obligations and partnership working</b></p> <p>Is the implementation of this strategy / policy / procedure / practice due to be carried out wholly or partly by contractors / commissioning? If yes, have you done any work to include equality and human rights considerations into the contract / service level agreements already?</p> <p>If you have, please set out what steps you will take to build into all stages of the procurement / commissioning process the requirement to consider the general equality duties and equality more broadly.</p> <p>Specifically you should set out how you will make sure that any partner you work with complies with equality and human rights legislation. You will need to think about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tendering and Specifications</li><li>• Processes for awarding contracts</li><li>• Contract / SLA clauses</li><li>• Performance measures and monitoring</li></ul>
<p>n/a</p>

## Step 6 – making a decision

<p><b>6.1. Summarise your findings and give an overview of whether the strategy / policy / procedure / practice will meet the council's responsibilities in relation to equality and human rights</b></p> <p>Wiltshire Council believes that no resident of Wiltshire should live in fear of abuse from any member of the household and will take steps to assist and support any person suffering from abuse or being threatened with violence.</p> <p>We believe at this stage that the Policy meets the council's responsibilities in relation to equality and human rights.</p>
<p><b>6.2. What practical actions do you recommend to reduce, justify or remove any adverse / negative impact?</b></p> <p>Please note that these should be reflected in the action plan (see Step 8).</p> <p>While we are not aware at this stage of any adverse impact entailed by the Policy, we are also aware of the gaps in our understanding of the local breakdowns of domestic abuse. As such, monitoring of all reported incidences of domestic abuse will take place, in order to identify any patterns and gaps in accessing or take-up of support services.</p>

## Step 7 – monitoring, evaluating and reviewing

<b>7.1. How will the recommendations of this assessment be built into wider planning and review processes?</b>
<a href="#">This may include policy reviews, annual plans and use of performance management systems.</a>
The implementation of any recommendation as result of this assessment will be monitored by the Housing Teams. Should any future policies be adopted that are similar to this, then this information will be used to inform the policy.
<b>7.2. How will you monitor the impact and effectiveness of the strategy / policy / procedure / practice?</b>
<a href="#">This could include adaptations or extensions to current monitoring systems, relevant timeframes and a commitment to carry out an EIA review once the policy has been in place for one year.</a>
Outcomes of monitoring will be reported to the service heads and will inform future reviews of this Policy. Monitoring will take place in line with the DASH risk assessment protocols.
<b>7.3. Give details of how the results of the impact assessment will be published</b>
<a href="#">There is legal requirement to publish assessments. Completed assessments should be first be quality assured and then, once signed off, be published on the Council website, via the Web Team.</a>
Outcomes of monitoring will be provided to the service head. The impact assessment will be published once signed off and approved on our website and made available to the public.

## Step 8 – action plan

Taking into consideration the responses outlined in Steps 1-7, complete the action plan below (if appropriate).				
	Actions	Target date	Responsible post holder and Directorate	Monitoring post holder and Directorate
Involvement, Consultation and Partnerships	Consultation on the Domestic Abuse Policy (Housing) to include consultation with relevant equality groups.	March 2010		
Data collection and evidence	Seeking further data from Wiltshire Police, Splitz, Victim Support and Westlea Housing to inform the evidence base of the Policy	September 2010	Performance and Research Officer, Housing Strategy	
Assessment and analysis	Outcomes of monitoring to be analysed and used to inform future reviews of the Policy	ongoing	Service heads	
Procurement and Commissioning	n/a at this stage			
Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing	<p>1. Monitoring pro-forma to be completed, pending receipt of the DASH risk assessment forms.</p> <p>2. The procedures will be reviewed once a year to assess how effective they have been and how practical they are to operate.</p> <p>3. The Domestic Abuse Policy will be reviewed by Wiltshire Council every year, using the monitoring data to inform the review.</p>	<p>1. September 2010</p> <p>2. Annual</p> <p>3. Annual</p>	<p>1. Performance &amp; Research Officer, Housing Strategy</p> <p>2. The Director of Housing, Team Leaders and Case Officers.</p> <p>3. Full review process to be led by Service heads</p>	

	4. Any new legislation, best practice or guidance may be introduced into policy and procedure before any timetabled review.	4. Ongoing		
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## Sign-off

**The final stage of the EIA is to formally sign off the document as being a complete, rigorous and robust assessment**

The strategy / policy / procedure / practice has been fully assessed in relation to its potential effects on equality and all relevant concerns have been addressed.

### Author of strategy / policy / procedure / practice and EIA

Name:	Job title and directorate:	Date:	Signature:
Sarah Hartley	Performance & Research Officer, Housing Directorate		

### Quality check: screening document has been checked by:

Name:	Date:	Signature:
Claire Pullan	Service Development Officer Housing Directorate	

### Director level (sign-off)

Name:	Job title and directorate:	Date:	Signature:
Graham Hogg	Director of Housing		

## **Wiltshire Council**

### **Sanctuary Scheme**

#### **A scheme to prevent homelessness for victims of domestic violence**

#### **1. Background**

- 1.1 As a local authority, Wiltshire Council has a statutory duty to work in partnership with other agencies on a variety of issues including crime and disorder. Domestic violence has an impact on local authority services such as housing, homelessness and social services.
- 1.2 There are some victims of domestic violence who choose to relocate to another area and there are some who would prefer to remain in their homes with support and help from other agencies.
- 1.3 The scheme is voluntary and available to men and women living in any tenure
- 1.4 The scheme must operate in conjunction with the police and voluntary sector
- 1.5 A secure 'sanctuary' can be provided by creating a safe room with reinforced doors and bolts
- 1.6 Security arrangements/assessments are tailored to the needs and circumstances of individual households
- 1.7 The service is free of charge to the client

#### **2. Key objective**

- 2.1 To prevent homelessness by providing additional security and support to victims of domestic violence and hate crime to remain in their home if they choose to do so.

#### **3. Purpose**

- 3.1 The Sanctuary Scheme is a victim centred initiative which aims to make it possible for victims of domestic violence and hate crime to remain in their homes and feel safe, rather than being forced to relocate to other areas away from family networks, employment and schooling.
- 3.2 The scheme must provide security measures to allow a person to remain in their home - where he/she chooses to do so - where safety and security can be increased and the violent partner no longer lives within the home. It must be available across tenures where the landlord of the property has given permission for the work to be carried out. It must consist of additional security to any main entrance doors to the accommodation and locks to any vulnerable windows. Wherever possible it must provide a safe room in the home secured with a solid core door and additional locks. It is essential that the service is only provided where it is the clear choice of the victim.

- 3.3 The Sanctuary Scheme will be offered to all applicants who present to the Housing Options Team in Wiltshire Council or other referring agencies via the referral procedure. The scheme should only be offered if homelessness would occur without the service.

#### **4. Service provided under sanctuary**

- 4.1 Although there are essentially two levels of Sanctuary, the safety requirements are tailored to accommodate the needs of the individuals involved.
- Level One Sanctuary – this includes a number of security options such as changing door locks, fitting window locks etc. Victims are provided with fire safety equipment, which may include break glass hammers and smoke detectors.
  - Level Two Sanctuary – this includes all the above plus provides a ‘safe’ room where victims can wait until the arrival of the police. The door to the room is replaced with a solid core door, reversed to open outwards with two mortice bolts fitted to the inside of the door along with three large steel hinges, hinge bolts and a 180 degree door viewer. An emergency telephone is installed in every sanctuary room. Additional security features, such as extra ‘sanctuary’ type doors to the front and rear of the property.
- 4.2 The Wiltshire Bobby Van Trust is not responsible for making good by decoration any cosmetic damage caused by the installation of a safe room and will not return the property to its original state before Sanctuary if the household moves.

#### **5. Procedures**

- 5.1 The service will be activated when a Housing Options Advisor (following an initial application for re-housing on the grounds of homelessness as a result of domestic violence) recognises the Sanctuary Scheme as a potential and appropriate solution to an applicant’s housing problem.

**Agencies involved in the referral process must ensure that the Sanctuary Scheme is the most appropriate solution for the victim and that homelessness would have occurred without the service.**

5.2 After receiving a referral, directly from a client or from a referral agency, the Housing Options Team at Wiltshire Council will interview the client or contact the referring agency and decide whether the case meets the Sanctuary criteria i.e. if a Sanctuary wasn’t provided the person would be likely to become homeless.

5.3 If agreed, the Housing Options Advisor completes Form 991 which must be completed and sent via e-mail to the WBVT on [bobbyvan@wiltshire.police.uk](mailto:bobbyvan@wiltshire.police.uk). The Domestic Abuse Unit (DAU) completes a risk assessment and contacts the Wiltshire Bobby Van Trust (WBVT) to carry out an assessment of the works required. The DAU and WBVT can initiate referrals but all levels of works to be undertaken must be assessed and approved by one of the Housing Options Managers in an area office.

5.4 The Housing Options Advisor will identify the tenure type and notify the landlord of possible works under Sanctuary. This will provide an opportunity for a private landlord, in particular, to be at the property (with the client's permission) when WBVT visits to make its recommendations and assessments.

5.5 The WBVT contacts the client to make an appointment to view the property. If an agency is working with the client, a joint visit may be beneficial. However, if the client has contacted the local authority direct, the need for a supporting agency ie Splitz to become involved will need to be considered and discussed with the client.

5.6 The WBVT will attend the premises and complete a security survey and risk assessment based on any known police knowledge of the perpetrator. The survey should be undertaken in the presence of the victim in order that all security options can be fully explained.

5.7 Client decides on whether or not to opt for the Sanctuary Scheme.

5.8 If the client confirms acceptance of the Scheme, the WBVT sends its recommendations for work to Wiltshire Council. It is envisaged that the majority of cases will be Level One Sanctuary, which would enable works to be carried out the same day but this can only be achieved if approval from the landlord is given. To avoid unnecessary delays, social landlords must have prior knowledge and commitment to the provision of the Sanctuary Scheme.

5.9 All works will be subject to planning and building regulations approval.

5.10 Sanctuary cannot be seen as an immediate emergency response and, depending on the works required, could take from 5 days plus. A victim may require temporary accommodation during this period, such as staying with family or staying at a women's refuge which offers support and safety. The Housing Options Advisor will work with the victim and other supporting agencies as required to ensure safety is paramount.

## **6. Fire safety**

6.1 Fire safety is paramount and the fire service is fully involved in planning the Sanctuary Scheme.

## **7. Equalities statement**

7.1 The policy aims to deliver quality services without prejudice and discrimination to meet the needs of all the community, regardless of age, cultural ethnic background, disability, gender, marital status, religious or political persuasion or sexual orientation.

The policy will adhere to the Equality and Diversity policy developed by Wiltshire Council.

## **8. Monitoring and reviewing the scheme**

8.1 The scheme will be reviewed annually, with the next review due in April 2011 (currently underway).

**Sources**

- Wiltshire Council Domestic Abuse Strategy 2009-11
- Home Office, Domestic Violence: A National Report, March 2004
- Wiltshire Council Ant-social behaviour strategy
- Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) “Hidden Harm”
- Wiltshire Council “Hidden Harm” Strategy 2010
- Action on Addiction, UK research, Key Statistics 2009
- Kroll, Bryanna (2004) “Living with the elephant: Growing up with parental substance abuse”
- Old heads on young shoulders, NSPCC and ChildLine
- “The Response of Child Protection Practices and Procedures to Children Exposed to Domestic Violence or Parental Substance Misuse”
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010)
- The National Drug Strategy 2008 -2018: protecting families & communities
- Safe, Sensible Drinking – National Alcohol Strategy 2007
- Change for Children - Working Together to Safeguard Children (2006/10)
- Children's plan: Building Brighter Futures
- The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report (Lord Laming) 2009)
- Think Family: Improving Life Chances of Families at Risk (2008)
- Joint Guidance on Development of Local Protocols between Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services and Local Safeguarding and Family services (2009)
- DfES (2005b). Every Child Matters: Change for Children Young People and Drugs
- ‘Together we can end violence against women and girls: a strategy’ HM Government
- ‘Dealing with cases of forced marriage – guidelines for police’; Home affairs select committee
- Protocol 5 Children Who Experience Domestic Violence developed by Wiltshire and Swindon ACPCs, Revised 13 November 2006
- Wiltshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2009