Housing Domestic Violence Policy
Housing Division
Housing, Leisure and Public Health
London Borough of Hounslow – Housing Division

The Authority is committed to delivering a user centred service for victims of Domestic Violence whilst working in partnership to mitigate the effects of Domestic Violence on victims and children.

Produced by:
Housing Client and Partnerships Team

London Borough of Hounslow
Civic Centre
Lampton Road
Hounslow
TW3 4DN

0208 583 3758

www.Hounslow.gov.uk
Foreword

As Lead Member for Education, Housing and Human Resources, I am very pleased to be able to introduce the Housing Domestic Violence Policy.

Domestic Violence has been recognised as a significant social and health issue with untold misery to those directly affected and their families. This policy aims to tackle Domestic Violence and related issues by adopting a client-centred approach and enhancing multi-agency partnership working. It builds on the excellent work that has been going on in Hounslow for many years.

I am confident that we have developed a Housing Domestic Violence Policy that will focus our efforts towards the goal of reducing the levels of Domestic Violence in the Borough and obtaining the best outcomes for victims and their families.

Councillor Steve Curran
Lead Member for Education,
Housing and Corporate HR
## Table of contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Definitions</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Scope of Policy</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Policy Aims and Objectives</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Key facts about Domestic Violence</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Domestic Violence Partnership working</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Performance Indicators</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The Council’s duties towards a homeless person</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Housing options for victims of Domestic Violence</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Staff Duties and responsibilities</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Complex Domestic Violence cases</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Advice and legal remedies</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Hounslow Community Safety information sharing protocol</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Victims of Domestic Violence with additional support needs</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Safeguarding Adults</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Safeguarding Children / Child Protection</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Domestic Violence Homicide Reviews</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Equalities and Diversity</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Confidentiality, Data Protection and Freedom of Information</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Monitoring and reviewing this policy</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>Error! Bookmark not defined.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Introduction

On 25\textsuperscript{th} November 2010, to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the Coalition Government launched a paper outlining their ambition and guiding principles to tackle violence against women and girls. The main principles are to:-

a) Prevent violence from happening by challenging the attitudes and behaviours which foster it and intervening early where possible to stop it.

b) Provide adequate support where violence does occur.

c) Work in partnership to obtain the best outcome for victims and their families.

d) Take action to reduce the risk to women and girls who are victims of these crimes and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice.

It is important to acknowledge that anybody can be affected by Domestic abuse and anyone can be an abuser. It doesn’t just happen to women – men can be victims too, whether their partner is a man or a woman and are living together or not. The Council’s Housing Options Service is able to provide housing advice and support to all those reporting Domestic Violence.

The development of a Domestic Violence Policy is a key action in the Council’s Housing Strategy 2010-2014 and the emerging updated Housing Strategy being developed for the period 2012 to 2017.

2. Definitions

“Domestic Violence”

A cross-government definition of Domestic Violence is ‘Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality’.

This definition, which is not a legal definition, includes so called ‘honour’ based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

“Victim”: A person who is experiencing Domestic Violence and seeking help.

Domestic Violence is a pattern of controlling and abusive behaviour that can be physical, psychological or emotional. Domestic Violence may include the following:-

- Threats of violence.
- Threatening behaviour / behaviour that is likely to cause significant panic, anxiety or fear.
- Any form of Physical assault or verbal abuse.
- Bullying and intimidation.
- Violence or threats to children.
• Humiliation, undermining or criticism.
• Being prevented from working.
• Confinement to the home.
• Sexual violence, exploitation, abuse or rape.
• Deprivation of money, food or other resource.
• Control over when you are able to go out, how long you can be out and who you are able to meet.
• Cultural abuse.
• Coercive behaviour.

(NB: this is not an exhaustive list)

Section 177 of the Housing Act 1996 states the following in respect of Domestic Violence:

It is not reasonable for a person to continue to occupy accommodation if it is probable that this will lead to Domestic Violence against him or her, or against a person who normally resides with him or her as a member of his or her family, or any other person who might reasonably be expected to reside with him or her.

For this purpose “Domestic Violence”, in relation to a person, means violence from a person with whom he is associated, or threats of violence from such a person which are likely to be carried out.

The 1996 Housing Act defines the types of relationships in which Domestic Violence could occur and the Housing Options team will make Homelessness decisions having due regard for statutory guidance and relevant case law.

3. Scope of Policy

This policy is for anyone who reports Domestic Violence to the Housing Options Service. Council tenants and leaseholders will be referred to Hounslow Homes who have a separate Domestic Violence procedure.

Registered Providers’ (also known as Housing Associations) tenants should report Domestic Violence directly to their landlord. However if they approach the Council first, the Housing Options Service will complete an initial assessment and liaise with the relevant landlord.

Council officers will be expected to work in accordance with the West London Domestic Violence Framework (see page 11).

This policy refers to applicants, victims, respondents, suspects and perpetrators in gender neutral and non-discriminatory terms.
4. Policy aims and objectives

The policy aims to ensure that the Council:-

a) Operates a Housing Domestic Violence policy that is victim centred and treats all reports of Domestic Violence in line with a defined policy and procedure framework.

b) Is able to deal with all Domestic Violence related requests for housing advice and assistance in line with relevant legislation and our Housing Allocations Policy.

c) Works in collaboration with partner agencies and the community sector in relation to addressing the needs of victims of Domestic Violence.

d) Acts as a conduit to raise the issue of Domestic Violence amongst our stakeholders and partners.

e) Ensures frontline staff dealing with Domestic Violence cases operate within a qualitative policy and procedure framework and receive appropriate training to raise levels of awareness.

f) Has practices which are aligned to the Government’s Violence against Women and Girls Agenda and the Council’s commitment to reducing victim based violence.

g) Has practices which complement the aims and objectives of the London Borough of Hounslow’s Violence against Women and Girls Strategy (VAWG – see Appendix 1 for further details) and the Community Safety Strategy.

h) Gathers monitoring and statistical information relating to Domestic Violence to support and underpin the strategic planning process.

5. Key facts about Domestic Violence

In Hounslow in 2010-11, there were 4335 reports of Domestic Violence to the Police. Of these, 78% of the victims who reported Domestic Violence in the borough were women. This compares with 4054 reports in 2009-10 and 3982 reports in 2008-9. [Source: Metropolitan Police Service Statistics].

Variation in reporting levels can depend on a number of factors such as the proportion of residents within a borough, good relationships with Domestic Violence partner agencies and effective community engagement. However, consideration must be taken of the fact that many incidents are not reported. Domestic Violence is, unfortunately, a borough wide and national issue.
However analysis has shown that incidents occur more frequently within the Hounslow Heath and Feltham [Source: Executive Summary Crime and Disorder Audit 2010-2011].

Domestic Violence incidents occur more frequently between the hours of 19:00 and 00:00, which is when nearly 34% of all Domestic Violence reported incidents occur and 47% of all Domestic Violence incidents occur between Friday and Sunday. There does not seem to be any seasonal trend for Domestic Violence incidents.

A very high percentage of people who experience Domestic Violence are females between the ages of 26 and 35 years. In addition:

- 80% of Domestic Violence is perpetrated by men against women.
- 90% of children in the home are in the same or next room when the violence takes place.
- Domestic Violence has a higher rate of repeat victimisation than any other crime.
- Domestic Violence has no boundaries in relation to race, sexuality, employment status and disability.
- On average 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men will experience Domestic Violence.
- A woman is most at risk of violence when she is considering leaving or has just left.
- Domestic Violence often escalates during pregnancy

6. Domestic Violence partnership working

A multi-agency approach is crucial to ensure the safety of victims and their families. The Council aims to work in partnership with other social landlords as well as statutory and voluntary organisations to identify and improve Domestic Violence Services in Hounslow.

The Council is a member of Hounslow Domestic Violence Network (HDVN) which is a multi-agency forum made up of representatives from both voluntary and statutory organisations. The HDVN aims to work as a consultative group sharing information and networking between practitioners (see Appendix 2 for details of HDVN).

All Housing Options Service staff should promote a partnership approach to Domestic Violence issues and assist with referrals to agencies and other Council services. The Council will make every effort to participate in multi-agency training initiatives and actively promote joint training with other Council services.

7. Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators help to establish workflows in relation to Domestic Violence case handling and also provide an overall picture of this client group. The collation of performance indicators helps with the strategic planning process as well as assisting in the management of resources.
The following key Domestic Violence performance indicators are currently collated:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Performance Indicator</th>
<th>Frequency of collation</th>
<th>Responsible Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completion of enquiries and notifying the applicant of the decision within 33 working days of accepting a duty to make inquiries under section 184 of the Housing Act 1996.</td>
<td>Quarterly</td>
<td>Housing Options Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of acceptances where Domestic Violence is the main priority need</td>
<td>Quarterly</td>
<td>Housing Options Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason for loss of last settled accommodation for accepted homeless households where Domestic Violence is primary reason</td>
<td>Quarterly</td>
<td>Housing Options Service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Housing Options Service will continue to work closely with the Community Safety Team to identify ways in Domestic Violence performance related information can be improved or enhanced.

8. The Council’s duties towards a homeless person

The Council’s statutory duties towards the homeless are prescribed within the Housing Act 1996 Part VII as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002. This is referred to as Homelessness Legislation.

NB: The Housing Options Service is responsible for assessments under Homelessness legislation. This is often a complex assessment process and it is not possible to give full details of the Legislation and assessment process within this policy. The following provides a brief overview of homelessness legislation as it may pertain to victims of Domestic Violence:-

At the initial homeless approach, the Council considers the 3* criteria or tests set out below:-:

1. Eligibility (is the applicant subject to immigration control?).
2. Homelessness (see definition below).
3. Priority need (see definition below).

*NB: There are a total of five criteria that have to be met in order for the Council to rehouse an applicant into settled accommodation.
Homelessness legislation definition of **homeless** as it relates to a victim of Domestic Violence is as follows:-

“S/he has accommodation but it is not reasonable for him/her to continue to occupy”

Homelessness Legislation definition of **priority need** as it relates to a victim of Domestic Violence is as follows:-

“They are vulnerable as a result of ceasing to occupy accommodation because of violence threats, threats of violence from another person which are likely to be carried out”.

Where a victim flees from an abusive situation, Homelessness legislation places an **interim or initial duty** on housing authorities to provide temporary or emergency accommodation to victims who meet criteria 1-3 above.

The type of temporary accommodation offered depends on family size and the needs of the family. Allocation of interim/emergency accommodation will take the needs of the applicant into consideration, i.e. not being placed near the violent partner. The victim should be offered accommodation based on suitability and may in some instances be placed in interim accommodation outside of the borough if there is:-

a. A high level of risk should the victim remain in the Borough.

b. A limited supply of interim accommodation inside the Borough.

Where a victim has been placed in temporary/emergency accommodation the Housing Options Service will be expected to complete a full homelessness assessment to determine whether the Council has a **full Homelessness duty** towards the applicant.

The Housing Options Service assess homelessness applications in accordance with the Homelessness Code of Guidance – details of which can be found at the following web link:


**9. Housing options for victims of Domestic Violence**

The Housing Options Service continues to place a strong emphasis on homelessness prevention and options enabling people’s housing needs to be met in a planned way. Domestic Violence is the third most frequently cited reason for Homelessness applications.

We have a range of housing options for victims of Domestic Violence which include:-

“Sanctuary”

This is provided by Hounslow Safer Homes Project and is a security measure that can be provided to victims of Domestic Violence with their consent. This
APPENDIX 1

project safeguards those reporting Domestic Violence (and their family) against incidents of a threatening or violent nature. It ensures that the person experiencing Domestic Violence can securely remain in their home in most circumstances with extra security provisions to make them feel safe. The security measures can be provided to all residents of Hounslow, regardless of tenure. Referrals are made via the Hounslow Domestic Violence Outreach Service (HDVOS) – details of which can be found at Appendix 3.

Rehousing Options

An applicant will be placed in a Band A, B or C (subject to the outcome of the consultation on the draft Allocation Policy which is being reviewed in late 2012) under the Choice Based Lettings Scheme. This will be once the Council has accepted a full duty to re-house the applicant under the homelessness legislation. The applicant can be rehoused into accommodation provided by the Council, a Registered Provider or a private landlord. Where suitable and affordable an applicant will also be given advice and assistance in relation to home ownership.

Further details relating to Choice Based Lettings in Hounslow can be found at the following web link:-

http://www.hounslow.gov.uk/index/housing/applyforhousing.htm

The West London Domestic Violence Framework

The West London Domestic Violence Framework is an agreement between the 7 West London boroughs and 20 Registered Providers. The aim of the Framework is to prevent Secure and Assured Council or Registered Provider tenants in West London from losing their tenancy and becoming homeless due to Domestic Violence.

It enables tenants who are at risk of Domestic Violence and need to move to another borough to do so without having to make a homeless application and without the need for a further assessment by the borough they wish to move to. The Framework operates as follows:-

- The borough accepting a referral will place the tenant in Band A on their Choice Based Lettings scheme for 3 months.
- Emergency temporary accommodation will be provided and the tenant will have to give up their tenancy once it is agreed to house them.
- The case will be reviewed after 10 weeks following which:
  - The Band A priority may be extended;
  - A direct offer made or;
  - If there is no prospect of an offer in the short term, the tenant may have to make a homeless application and be placed in long term temporary accommodation.

The following link shows how the Framework operates:-

http://www.westlondonhousing.org.uk/uploads/WLDVRecipsFlowcharts.doc
Women’s Refuge

A Refuge is a safe house for women and children escaping Domestic Violence. The address is confidential and no men are allowed in the building. A Refuge is a place where women can be sure they are safe, and where they can access emotional and practical support from staff who understand what they have been through. A Refuge is emergency accommodation only and should not be seen as a long term housing solution for victims. In many instances victims may be placed in a Refuge outside of the Borough.

Council Tenants

When a report of Domestic Violence is received by the Housing Options Service from an existing tenant or joint tenant of the Council, the Duty Officer should make contact with the relevant Officer within Hounslow Homes. Hounslow Homes has a separate Domestic Violence procedure in place for existing tenants by way of a transfer or other local mechanism/option such as access to the Joint Assessment Referral Panel in 2012 (see further details in Appendix 4).

In case of an emergency due to Domestic Violence, Housing Options Service will take the necessary steps to provide a temporary safe place for the victim pending a decision to transfer into alternative accommodation.

For further details please contact the ASB and tenancy team on 0800 085 65 75 or visit www.hounslowhomes.org.uk

Mutual Exchange and cross borough bidding

All Council Tenants who wish to exchange their property will be supported to complete a Housing Swap Form only where it is safe and appropriate to pursue this option and depending on their wishes.

The Council is one of the partners in a scheme where tenants approved under the Management Transfer System can bid for a like for like property either within the borough or in the boroughs of Brent, Ealing, Harrow and Hillingdon. Other partners in the scheme are Catalyst Housing Association, Paradigm Housing Group and Paddington Churches Housing Association.

Non tenants living in a Council property

Where a person experiencing Domestic Violence is neither a sole nor joint tenant, but lives in a Council property, the person shall be referred to the Housing Options Service at the Civic Centre for an assessment by the Emergency Duty Officer.

Registered Providers in Hounslow

When a report of Domestic Violence is received by the Council from a tenant of a Registered Provider, the Duty Officer should make contact with the relevant Officer or Manager to discuss available housing options for their tenant.
Registered Providers in the borough are expected to take action against perpetrators of Domestic Violence who are tenants and provide appropriate support to the victims including the provision of alternative accommodation where necessary. Registered Providers will also be able to refer cases to the Joint Assessment Referral Panel provided the referral criteria are met.

**Single Victims with no vulnerabilities**

If a victim is single and does not have any other vulnerability issues, the Case Officer can signpost the victim to available support agencies within the borough. The Housing Domestic Violence Outreach Service provides support to all victims of Domestic Violence. More details about the service can be found in Appendix 3.

**No recourse to public funds**

If a victim is subject to immigration control, they cannot claim most state benefits, at least until a decision is made on their right to remain in the country. This is called having 'no recourse to public funds'. This rule may force the victim into total dependence on the perpetrator and may make it much harder for them to leave. There is the option of assistance through the Home Office’s Destitution Domestic Violence Concession (which replaces the Sojourner Project). For more information please refer to the Home Office website, listed in Appendix 8.

There are some limited exceptions to this rule. Funding is available through ‘Supporting People’ to allow women with insecure immigration status who are experiencing Domestic Violence access to ‘housing related support’, either in a Refuge, other temporary accommodation, or in the community (through 'floating support'). However, this only covers the cost of support staff and does not cover the rent charged in Refuges or other temporary accommodation, nor does it provide the victim or children with any living expenses.

The Council will ensure that where possible we use our powers under the Local Government Act, National Assistance Act and Children’s Act to support households at significant risk. The Council will also work with local agencies and partners to support this client group where appropriate. Locally we know that victims with no recourse to public funds can be high risk and all staff are expected to liaise with the Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) (see Section 12) to discuss the cases on an individual basis.

**10. Staff duties and responsibilities**

The responsibility of the Housing Domestic Violence Policy lies with Officers within the Housing Options Service, which includes:-

1. The Head of Housing Strategy and Options has overall responsibility for:-
   - Ensuring that this Policy is adhered to and that staff are trained accordingly.
   - Reviewing the Policy with a view to monitoring its effectiveness.
• Ensuring appropriate procedures/work instructions are in place to underpin this Policy.
• Ensuring information about services for people experiencing Domestic Violence is available.
• Ensuring staff are supported when dealing with stressful and distressing cases and given access to the Occupational Health Service as appropriate.
• Ensuring staff are not exposed to serious risk of harm and that health and safety at work guidelines are adhered to.

2. All Team Leaders within Housing Options Service will ensure that their teams comply with all procedures/work instructions arising from this policy and report any issues to the Head of Housing Strategy and Options.

3. All staff must be aware of the fact that perpetrators may go to great lengths to find a victim. In view of this, all staff must adhere to confidentiality and disclosure procedures.

11. Complex Domestic Violence cases

From time to time a Domestic Violence case may be complex or contentious. Team Leaders are expected to immediately brief the Head of Housing Strategy and Options if it is felt that a case may be complicated. From time to time it may be necessary to convene a case conference where the victim is supported by a number of agencies/parties.

The Head of Housing Strategy and Options should ensure that details of such cases are brought to the attention of the Community Safety Team (see Appendix 5) and where necessary convene a case conference to review the case and discuss/explore an appropriate course of action.

The Head of Housing Strategy and Options will, in consultation with senior colleagues within other Council services, be responsible for reviewing the case including all paper based and computerised records. The Head of Housing Strategy and Options is also expected to ensure that any lessons learned are embedded in procedures and practices within his or her service.

12. Advice and legal remedies

Officers in the Housing Options Service are not expected to provide victims with legal or other forms of advice for example taking legal action against a perpetrator. Frontline staff are expected to liaise with local Domestic Violence service providers who will help the victim to access legal advice as appropriate.

The Council will continue to work closely with Domestic Violence service providers. There are 2 Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVA), one linked to Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) (Appendix 6) and one linked to the Court service. The Court service IDVA is provided by Victim Support and involves the professional provision of advice,
information and support to victims of Domestic Violence, whilst they are going through the Court process. The key aim of the service is to inform victims about the range of effective and suitable options to improve their safety and that of their children. The service is independent from the Police and Her Majesty's Court Service.

The Court IDVA is a person who is specially trained to offer professional and confidential support and advice to women experiencing Domestic Violence. The advice covers improved safety, security as well as remedies available through the Criminal and Civil Courts. The Court IDVA will:-

- Advise and support victims, before, during and after the court process.
- Explore and explain the victim’s rights and options.
- Report progress of the case.
- Signpost the victim to other organisations/agencies in the London Borough of Hounslow, for continued support.
- Liaise with external agencies in the London Borough of Hounslow such as the Police, Crown Prosecution Service, Probation Service, Criminal Justice Unit and Her Majesty’s Court Service on behalf of the Victim.

13. Hounslow Community Safety information sharing protocol

The purpose of this Protocol is to clarify and facilitate the exchange of information between partners within the Community Safety Partnership in the London Borough of Hounslow (“LBH”). It supersedes any previous information sharing protocol between the partners of the Community Safety Partnership.

The signatories to this Protocol (together referred to as “Partners” and each referred to as “Partner”) have entered into this Protocol to facilitate the lawful and secure exchange of information for the overall purpose of the reduction of crime and disorder and the furtherance of national and local agendas in relation to substance misuse in LBH.

All staff dealing with Domestic Violence cases will be expected to adhere to the dictates of the Hounslow Community Information sharing protocol – details of which can be found at the following link:-

http://intranet.hounslow.gov.uk/isp_staff_guidance.pdf

14. Victims of Domestic Violence with additional support needs

Where a victim of Domestic Violence has additional support needs/vulnerabilities the Council will ensure that they have access to Resettlement services as applicable. Vulnerable victims will have access to the Joint Assessment and Referral Panel (JARP) if they meet the referral criteria and have an urgent need for rehousing support (see Appendix 4 for details of the Joint Assessment Referral Panel)

Where a victim is affected by substance misuse such as drugs or alcohol and it is felt that an additional package of ongoing support may be necessary,
Case officers are expected to refer the victim to the Resettlement team within the Housing Options Service in line with existing procedures.

**15. Safeguarding Adults**

The Duty Officer should assess whether the victim is vulnerable due to age, disability (mental, physical or sensory), illness or frailty and requires assistance in their day to day living.

If the victim is unable to raise issues with their housing provider, the Duty Officer should with the victim’s consent contact any other professional working with them such as their Social Worker or Advocate. This will be to determine their vulnerability and any appropriate support that can be provided.

If the Duty Officer is still concerned, they should raise any issues with their line Manager and/or make a referral to the Adult Safeguarding Team in accordance with the Council’s Adult Safeguarding policy.

We will also support the new Pan London adult safeguarding procedures details of which can be found at the following link:-


**16. Safeguarding Children/Child Protection**

If there are concerns about the welfare of children within a household, the Housing Options Service is expected to ensure that safeguarding children procedures are adhered to at all times.

If the officer is concerned they should raise any issues with their line manager and/or make a referral to the Child Protection Team in accordance with the Council’s Children’s Safeguarding policy.

The Housing Options Team has a protocol in place with the local Health Authority, that all children under the age of 5 will be referred to a Health Visitor when placed into Bed and Breakfast accommodation. Health Visitors have an important role to play supporting parents in the care and protection of their children. They also play an important role in identifying and in the prevention of Domestic Violence and child abuse and we will continue to work closely with the Health Authority in relation to safeguarding children.

NOTIFY is a web-based notification and information system, designed to improve homeless households' access to services. Its primary role is to notify relevant services of the placement or movement of homeless households placed in temporary accommodation by London boroughs under homelessness legislation. It will also produce comprehensive information on homelessness and temporary accommodation in London. The system uses information provided by London borough housing departments to notify housing, education, social care and health services about homeless households placed in, moving between or leaving temporary accommodation.
NOTIFY is a valuable mechanism in relation to Child Protection and the Council will ensure that we continue to contribute to NOTIFY.

The Housing Options Service will ensure that procedures are in place to identify Child Protection issues in line with current practices. Further details about the role of the Council Child Protection teams can be found at the link below:-

http://intranet.hounslow.gov.uk/index/csl/specialist_services/child_protection.htm

17. Domestic Violence Homicide Reviews

Domestic Violence Homicide Reviews (DHR) are commissioned by local Community Safety Partners in response to deaths caused by Domestic Violence. They are subject to the guidance issued by the Home Office under the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004.

The intention of the review is broadly to establish:-

- The facts that led to the homicide.
- Lessons to be learned by the agencies involved.
- Whether agencies’ responses were appropriate.
- That policies and procedures are in place to respond to Domestic Violence.
- Recommendations to improve services or responses.
- Improved service responses to all Domestic Violence victims and their children through better intra and inter-agency working to prevent homicide.

Domestic Violence Homicide Reviews are not inquiries into how the victim died or who is to blame. That is a matter for Coroners and the Criminal Courts to determine.

Further details about DHRs can be found at the following link:-

DHR - Statutory Guidance for the conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews | Home Office

18. Equalities and Diversity

All officers shall have due regard for the London Borough of Hounslow’s Equal Opportunities and Cohesion Policy statement when dealing with customers, other staff members and stakeholders.

Officers shall ensure that they provide an equitable service, with positive regard and fair treatment for all communities regardless of age, colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality, race, appearance, religious belief, gender, marital status, sexuality, responsibility for dependants, disability, HIV, AIDS or any other health status, Trade Union or political activity and any other disadvantaged group in society.
This Domestic Violence policy recognises that particular groups are more vulnerable to Domestic Violence and these include women, those with a disability, ethnic minorities, older people and those who are Lesbian Gay, Bisexual and transgender (LGBT). Research and statistics show that women make up the greater percentage of victims/victims of Domestic abuse. However, men are affected by Domestic Violence and as such we will ensure that the needs of male victims are met.

Where standard letters are used these shall include details of the availability of a translation service.

Support agencies for Black and Minority Ethnic (BaME) victims

We recognise that some victims may require specialist support suited to their specific needs e.g. cultural and as such will be referred to local or regional support agencies as necessary. Some Domestic Violence organisations have workers or volunteers who speak a variety of languages, or they may have access to ‘Language Line’ (an interpretation and translation service). There are also a number of specialist services for women from ethnic minority communities, where the victim may be able to get support from women from the same ethnic, cultural or religious group.

We will continue to ensure that BaME victims are signposted and referred to local support services – details of which can be found at Appendix 7

19. Confidentiality, Data Protection and Freedom of Information

Domestic Violence cases must, at all times, be handled in a sensitive way by all staff involved in casework management. Of paramount important is the need to ensure that confidential information relating to victims of Domestic Violence is not disclosed to any third parties. Officers shall ensure that file and computer notes are recorded in a professional manner, i.e. objective and appropriate. Subjective personal comments and/or assumptions shall not be included on case files or computer records.

All reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that victims are interviewed in a private area. For the safety of women using the Refuge and the Refuge Workers, all Officers are expected not to disclose the address or phone number of the Refuge. The safety of Refuges as a place for people escaping violence relies on their whereabouts being known to as few a people as possible. The consequences of releasing these addresses to the “wrong” person are potentially very serious and could potentially result in a death.

Staff should not disclose confidential information to third parties without first obtaining the consent of the person involved, unless it is necessary for legal proceedings or where there are safeguarding implications. The Domestic Violence policy will operate within the confines of the Councils Confidentiality policy and Freedom of Information Act – details of which can be found at the following links:-
Corporate Confidentiality Policy


If in doubt officers should contact their line manager or their departmental nominated Data Protection Officer for guidance.

20. Monitoring and reviewing this policy

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Head of Housing Strategy and Options in conjunction with the Community Safety Team.
Appendix 1

Hounslow Violence against Women and Girls Strategy (VAWG)

This is Hounslow’s first Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy in response to the Home Office’s vision as set out in the document ‘A call to end Violence against Women and Girls’ published in November 2010, and the Mayor of London’s ‘The Way Forward’ paper in April 2009. The main principles are:-

1. **Prevention** to stop violence from happening by challenging the attitudes and behaviours which foster it and intervening early where possible to prevent it.
2. **Provision** of adequate support where violence does occur.
3. **Partnership** working to obtain the best outcome for victims and their families.
4. **Risk reduction and justice outcomes** - taking action to reduce the risk to women and girls who are victims of these crimes and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice.

The VAWG Strategy includes a detailed VAWG mapping exercise in Hounslow to address the prevalence of VAWG, specialist service provision, and future direction of a co-ordinated response in Hounslow. The research includes quantitative and qualitative methods including collation of key data sets, a service mapping exercise, practitioner’s survey and focus groups with victims.

Hounslow has long recognised the importance of developing services to help those fleeing Domestic Violence. As a result there have been some positive developments over the previous few years, including expansion of the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) process and supporting the establishment of the West London Rape Crisis Centre.

This work has so far informed us that while our current services deliver quality support and advice in some areas, notably Domestic Violence, we need to do more to address all strands of VAWG and the relationship between them, to better coordinate our services and to react to a world of rapidly changing technology and attitudes. Therefore the strategy not only encompasses Domestic Violence, but also sexual violence, stalking, so called ‘honour based violence’, forced marriage, female genital mutilation and trafficking for sexual exploitation.

The strategy will primarily focus on prevention. Violence against women is rooted in pervasive attitudes, cultures, norms and traditions that have been perpetuated over time and have allowed abusers to act with impunity. We will take the joint action necessary to provide protection and support to those who experience violence but also ensure that we work to transform the cultures and attitudes that perpetuate VAWG.
We are committed to providing awareness raising and a comprehensive training programme for professionals.

The Strategy will commit us to provide and support an effective network of specialist VAWG services that provide advocacy and support to those who are experiencing, or have experienced, gender based violence.

We will also ensure that victims of gender based violence are provided with an effective multi-agency response. Perpetrators will be managed effectively in order to reduce future harm and we will ensure that there is an effective criminal justice system response that further reduces risk of harm and that ultimately contributes to increasing victim safety and confidence.

The Strategy contains a range of challenges that we are determined to meet over the next 3 years and will be supported by a detailed action plan that will form the work of the Community Safety Partnership and its colleagues in the voluntary and private sectors.

Further details relating to the Government’s Violence against Women and Girls Agenda can be found at the following web link:-

http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime/violence-against-women-girls/
Appendix 2
Hounslow Domestic Violence Network (HDVN)

Terms of Reference

The Hounslow Domestic Violence Network is a multi-agency forum made up of representatives from both voluntary and statutory organisations. The forum aims to work as a consultative group sharing information and networking between practitioners.

Aims

• To work in partnership with statutory, voluntary and private sector organisations to develop and evaluate domestic violence services and at all times be representative of a multi-agency framework.

Objectives

• To ensure the membership of the Network is inclusive of personnel from both strategic and operational levels.

• To promote the work of the Network with the view to extend membership, share workload and reduce social tolerance towards domestic violence.

• To actively encourage victim participation in all aspects of domestic violence work carried out under the umbrella of the Network.

• To ensure all work carried out under the umbrella of the Network recognises the diverse communities living in Hounslow with the view to make services accessible for all.

• To share ideas and information with all members of the Network.

Frequency of Meetings

• The Domestic Violence Network will meet four times each year.
Chair and Vice Chair

When electing a Chair and Vice Chair the candidate should have a genuine understanding of the issues relating to hate crime and have the ability to address these sensitively.

1. Electing Chair and Vice Chair

The Chair and Vice Chair will be elected from within the Forum by a show of hands and will be in office for 12 months. The Chair is responsible for chairing the Forum meetings. The Vice Chair to deputise for the Chair as necessary.

2. Role of the Chair is to:-

- Ensure they can commit the time necessary to fulfil the role
- Chair the Domestic Violence Network meetings consistently and fairly.
- Lead in working together constructively at meetings.
- Maintain, manage and improve a positive working relationship with agencies, partners and stakeholders.
- Keep the Domestic Violence Forum relevant by reviewing the Terms of Reference every year, and ensuring overview of the forum membership and effectiveness.

3. Role of the Vice-Chair is to:-

- Share the workload of the Chair under his or her leadership.
- Deputise for the Chair in his or her absence.

Membership

The Hounslow Domestic Violence Network is an open forum.

Accountability

The DV Network Forum will be accountable to the DV Policy Group.

Administration

The Community Safety Team will be accountable and responsible for:-

- Servicing the Forum.
- Receiving agenda items.
- Minute taking.
- Setting the draft agenda (for approval by the Chair two weeks prior to the meeting).
- Undertaking any action arising from meetings and assigned to them.
• Monitoring the completion of actions arising from meetings and assigned to other members.

Every member of the DV Network has an equal right to place items on the agenda of each meeting. The Community Safety Officer for Domestic Violence and Hate Crime must receive agenda items and supporting information and materials, no later than three working weeks before the date of the next meeting. Wherever possible communication will be electronic. For members and other who do not have access to e-mail printed copies of materials will be made available.

**Code of Conduct**

Members must always behave in a way that:-

• Acknowledges the value of people’s different view points and interests.
• Supports the principles of equality and diversity.
• Challenges discrimination and prejudice.
Appendix 3
Hounslow Domestic Violence Outreach Service (HDVOS)

A generic crisis intervention service which is part of Sure Start in Hounslow that is open to all victims residing in the London Borough of Hounslow and provides:

- Advice on all civil remedies such as non-molestation and occupation orders (previously known as injunction orders).
- Advice on divorce procedures.
- Advice on Children Act proceedings.
- Advice on proceedings commenced by Children’s Services (previously known as Social Services) in respect of children.
- Advice on rights to housing and benefit entitlements.
- Referrals to other Domestic Violence agencies in the London Borough of Hounslow, for ongoing support.
- Referrals for the Hounslow Safer Homes Project
- Referrals to the Fonesforsafety Project: This service is a recycling scheme turning old mobile telephones into one-touch personal alarms, which connect directly to the 999 services.
Appendix 4
Joint Assessment Referral Panel (JARP)

The Joint Assessment and Referral Panel (JARP) is a London Borough of Hounslow led multi-agency panel which allows members the opportunity to jointly assess the rehousing needs of vulnerable clients/households. A joint assessment process ensures that vulnerable clients are appropriately banded and rehoused and receive targeted support as part of a rehousing package that suits their particular needs.

The JARP will consider the following circumstances:

a) Households with multiple or complex support and rehousing needs.

b) Victim of crime of a serious nature such as sexual assault, physical assault relating to the area and when the victim remains vulnerable by remaining in the property.

c) High risk of imminent danger linked to the property which can only be alleviated by an emergency move.

d) Traumatic event linked to the property where remaining in the property is likely to result in long term suffering of a serious possibly life threatening nature.

e) Hounslow Homes Management move where sensitive or difficult situations have to be managed.

f) Requirement for a specific type of adapted property where the move cannot be adequately managed through Locata and where current accommodation cannot be adapted.

g) Severe and ongoing harassment from neighbours when it is unlikely any other course of action will prevent further incident.

h) Witness to a crime which has placed the witness at risk.

i) Special circumstances, e.g. a complex or high profile public protection case where other housing options have been exhausted.

j) All JARP cases who have been awarded Band A in the past with a view to monitoring whether the client has been rehoused and/or requires additional support as part of the Panel case review process.

k) Any other exceptional case which falls outside of the Allocation Policy.
Appendix 5
Community Safety Team

The main duties of the Community Safety Team are:-

- To take forward the statutory duties for the council relevant to community safety.
- To support and co-ordinate the work of Hounslow Community Safety Partnership.

The Team undertakes its statutory duties as set out in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, and as amended in the Police Reform Act 2002 and more specifically by:-

1. Co-ordinating and implementing the borough’s three year Crime Reduction Strategy that is called the Community Safety Strategy.
2. Undertaking an Annual Strategic Assessment of crime, disorder and substance misuse in the borough.
3. Annual re-fresh of the Community Safety Strategy.
4. Consulting with residents about what crime priorities they want the Partnership to be addressing.
5. Supporting initiatives designed to reduce crime and disorder, the fear of crime and substance misuse in the borough.
6. Advising the partners within the Partnership on anti-social behaviour, community safety, crime reduction, disorder and substance misuse.

The Community Safety Strategy aims to increase support for victims of Domestic Violence, educate children and hold perpetrators accountable.

Further details about the Community Safety Team can be found at the following link:

http://www.hounslow.gov.uk/community_safety
Appendix 6

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference

The Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is a multi agency panel responsible for ensuring a coordinated community response to Domestic abuse.

MARAC aims to:-

- Share information about the household and perpetrator.
- Determine the level of risk to a household.
- Determine whether the alleged perpetrator poses a significant risk to any particular individual or to the general community.
- Construct jointly and implement a risk management plan and support plan to reduce the risk of harm.
- Reduce repeat victimisation.
- Ensure that a multi agency approach is adopted in relation to high risk cases.

The Council will continue to support the MARAC process to ensure that high risk/high profile Domestic Violence cases receive a coordinated response. All frontline staff will be expected to follow the MARAC risk assessment and referral processes.

Further details about MARAC can be found at the following link:

http://www.caada.org.uk/marac/MARAC.htm
Appendix 7
Services for Black and Minority Ethnic (BaME) victims

Free phone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline on 0808 2000 247, run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge. The Helpline is a member of Language Line and can provide access to an interpreter and suggest organisations in the victim’s area.

The following organisations are set up to provide confidential support to BaME victims and/or those who may be subject to immigration control:

- **Southall Black Sisters**: Resource centre mainly for Asian, African and Afro-Caribbean women. It provides advice and information on Domestic Violence, racial harassment, welfare and immigration rights and matrimonial rights. It provides face-to-face support and case work for women in the London Borough of Ealing, but also deals with enquiries on a national basis. Phone: 0208 571 9595. Email: sbs@leonet.co.uk. Website: [www.southallblacksisters.org.uk](http://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk)

- **Aanchal**: Helpline for Asian women experiencing Domestic Violence. Languages spoken include: Bengali, Hindi, Punjabi, Guajarati, Tamil and Urdu. Phone: 08454 512 547, every day 24 hours.

- **Chinese Information and Advice Centre**: For Chinese people on a low income, or who have difficulty communicating in English to access mainstream support services. Domestic Violence Line: 0207 462 1281; Legal Advice Line: 0207 462 1285.

- **Turkish Cypriot Women's Project**: Offers help with emergency housing, children, injunctions against violent partners, welfare benefits, health care matters and other issues related to Domestic Violence. It provides a free service for any Turkish-speaking woman living in London. Phone: 0208 340 3300. Open Mon - Fri 10am - 5pm.

- **Newham Asian Women's Project**: Based in the London Borough of Newham. The Project supports South Asian women who are experiencing Domestic Violence and offers a Resource Centre, refuges for women and children, counselling services and projects for teenagers and young women. Telephone: 020 8552 5524. Email: info@nawp.org. Website: [www.nawp.org](http://www.nawp.org)

- **Jewish Women's Aid**: Provides a number of different services including a helpline, floating support and outreach for Jewish women and their children. London based. Helpline: 0800 591 1203 (Mon - Fri 9.30am - 9.30pm, answer phone after hours). Office phone: 0208 445 8060, Monday - Friday 9am - 5pm.

- **NSPCC**: Has separate child protection help lines in a variety of Asian languages: Bengali 0800 096 7714; Guajarati 0800 096 7715; Hindi 0800
APPENDIX 1

096 7716; Punjabi 0800 096 7717; Urdu 0800 096 7718. Website: www.nspcc.org.uk
Appendix 8
Useful contacts

Independent Domestic Violence Advocate,
Feltham Magistrates Court
Hanworth Road
Feltham
Middlesex TW13 5AF
Telephone: 020 8751 6604

Victim Support line
0845 3030 900

Broken Rainbow Helpline
0300 999 5428

National Domestic Violence Helpline
0808 2000 247
0179

http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk/

Hounslow Police Witness Care Unit
020 8247 6179

Hounslow Domestic Violence Outreach Service (HDVOS)
0208 247 6466 [Sanctuary referrals]

Home Office – Destitution Domestic Violence Concession

The Destitution Domestic Violence Concession replaces the Sojourner Project. For more information please refer to the Home Office website

http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/while-in-uk/domesticviolence/

Men’s Advice line

This is a confidential service working with male victims of Domestic Violence facilitated by Respect. The helpline provides emotional and practical support and signposts to specialist agencies. Monday to Friday 10am– 1pm and 2pm– 5pm - 0808 801 0327.

http://www.mensadviceline.org.uk/mens_advice.php