



AGENDA ITEM:

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing and Community Overview & Scrutiny
Date of meeting:	17th July 2013
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Draft Domestic Abuse Policy
Contact:	Neil Harden, Portfolio Holder for Resident and Regulatory Services Author/Responsible Officer Julie Still – Group Manager Resident Services
Purpose of report:	(1) To inform members of the proposed corporate Domestic Abuse Policy and seek their views
Recommendations	1) The Domestic Abuse Policy is noted 2) Members views given and considered and taken into account prior to Cabinet report.
Corporate objectives:	Safe and Clean Environment, Community Capacity Dacorum Delivers
Implications:	<u>Financial</u> None <u>Value for Money</u>
'Value For Money Implications'	N/A.
Risk Implications	Reputation – an uncoordinated approach to Domestic Abuse could have detrimental impact on DBC reputation
Equalities	Assessment in progress

Implications	
Health And Safety Implications	Provides coordinated support to officers who may be victims of domestic abuse.
Consultees:	Hertfordshire County Council, Housing Service, Strategic Housing, Human Resources, MARAC – Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences, CAADA (Coordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse)
Background papers:	Dacorum Community Plan, DACORUM 2015 – A Better Borough, Hertfordshire County Council Domestic Abuse Policy, Hertfordshire CC, Herts Police Data – 2012/2013

Background

1. Definition

1.1 Domestic abuse has a wide definition which includes: -

- Physical Violence
- Psychological, sexual, financial and emotional abuse involving partners, ex-partners, other relatives or household members

1.2 The Council is proposing to adopt the following definition of domestic abuse: -

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

1.2 This definition incorporates Government and ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers) guidance and recognises that domestic abuse and occur between family members and is not just restricted to current or former partners. It also takes into account elder abuse, forced marriages, male victims and same-sex relationships.

1.3 It is recognised that domestic abuse is not restricted to a specific age group, race religion or socio-economic standing, but cuts across all sections of society and its effects can be debilitating on the individual concerned and society as a whole. (taken from draft policy)

2 Facts

2.1 In Dacorum between 1st April 2012 and 31st March 2013 there were 421 reports to the police of Domestic Violence Related Crimes.

2.2 This is an increase of 19.3% on the previous year and is a figure that would be expected to continue to rise with increased awareness and improved support for victims of domestic abuse. On average there will have been 35 assaults before a victim calls the police (Source: Living Without Abuse, 2013) so there is considerable under reporting.

2.3 The local MARAC (multi agency risk assessment conference) estimates that they receive 25% of the referrals that they should for serious and repeat victims of domestic abuse due to the significant under reporting.

2.4 Domestic abuse is the most quoted reason for becoming homeless (Shelter 2002).

3 Dacorum Borough Council Services

3.1 There are a number of front line services within the Council that will deal with the victims on a regular basis as an obvious part of their role. In addition to this, there are other services within the Council that will also deal with victims which are not so obvious and officers given the appropriate awareness training can offer support at an early stage.

3.2 The draft policy for Domestic Abuse (appendix A) aims to coordinate the Councils response to: -

- Intervene early in cases of domestic abuse;
- Protect those affected by domestic abuse; and
- Support victims of domestic abuse.

3.3 Staff can also be victims or perpetrators of domestic abuse and the draft policy recognises this and gives guidance.

3.4 The Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004 requires a review to take place after any domestic homicide.

3.5 The Chair of the RAOG (Responsible Authorities Officers Group) of the Community Safety Partnership is responsible for conducting a review and the document must be sent to the Home Office. In Dacorum's case the Chief Executive is the Chair of the RAOG..

3.6 There was a domestic homicide in Dacorum in 2012 which is currently subject to a review. The review will result in an action plan to address any areas that could be improved. The whole review will be sent to the Home Office for approval.

4 Actions supporting the policy

4.1 A lead officer for Domestic Abuse sits within the Resident Services Anti Social Behaviour Team. This office is highly trained and had been recognised by CAADA (Coordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse) as a champion in this field.

4.2 Designated Officers will be appointed in each service area. This approach is already in place for Safeguarding and officers will now be trained to include domestic abuse. These officers will provide a point of contact for their services for information, services related issues and any concerns. They will also act as a support network.

4.3 This information will be publicised as with first aiders so that all staff will know not only for domestic abuse but also for Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

4.4 A regular meeting is organised for the designated officers to discuss any barriers they may encounter and to take forward any improvements or actions that may be identified following on from reviews or as service improvements.

4.5 Over 80 front line staff have now been trained in domestic abuse awareness and 2 further courses for up to 40 more have been scheduled.