

# Domestic Violence



We can supply this information in large print, on audio tape or in your language. Please call 01202 264444 to discuss your requirements.

*Quality Homes In Strong Communities*



Poole Housing Partnership (PHP) believe that no resident should live in fear of domestic violence. Domestic Violence is a crime and the abuse has a devastating effect on the people who suffer from it. We recognise this and aim to provide a sensitive response to our residents.

## What is domestic violence?

Domestic abuse is about one person having power and control over another person. It can be:

- Physical- Beating, kicking, slapping, shoving, punching, burning, strangulation, stabbing, denying sleep, destroying possessions
- Mental- Emotional, humiliation, degradation, ridiculing, isolation from friends and family, verbal abuse, aggressive response, threats to harm children or family
- Sexual- Rape, enforced sex, prostitution, pornography, or any other sexual behaviour that you find unacceptable
- Financial- Denying money, taking control of your money

Domestic violence can occur regardless of peoples circumstances regarding age, race, sexuality, culture, religion, class, mental or physical ability, or any other difference.

It can be between adults who are (or have been) in a relationship together, or between family members. Although women are more likely to suffer domestic violence, with a man as the perpetrator, it can be the other way around, and can be between partners in same sex relationships.

The abuse often forms a pattern of behaviour, and usually becomes more frequent and more severe over time.

We know that:

- ➔ 1 in 4 women will experience Domestic Violence at some stage in her life
- ➔ 2 women are killed every week by their current or former partners
- ➔ Domestic violence accounts for one quarter of all violent crime reported to the Police, but less than 12% is reported to the Police

## **What is PHP's approach to assisting people who are suffering from domestic violence?**

PHP will put your wishes at the centre of our approach. We want you to feel in control of your situation so we will agree the way forward with you.

Our first concern will always be to make sure that you and any children involved are safe, and we will discuss ways of doing this with you.

PHP also work in partnership with other agencies to help you. You can contact them directly or we can refer you to them– there are some details at the back of this leaflet. We won't share or pass on your details to another organisation unless you are happy for us to do so. The only exception is if we feel that a child's safety is at risk, then we must tell Social Services by law.

Our Housing Officers receive regular training on domestic violence issues to make sure they can give you up-to-date, relevant advice.

PHP works closely with other organisations to address issues within Poole, to ensure agencies are working together to provide the best service possible to people who have experienced domestic violence.

We will keep records of any meetings we have with you. This information will be kept confidential, but can be used as evidence in support of your case if you have to go to Court or if you need to be re-housed.

### **What PHP will do:**

We will:

- Offer you a 'same sex' Officer to talk to within 24 hours or the next working day at a location where you feel comfortable
- Treat your enquiry in confidence
- Take your concerns seriously
- Find out what you would like us to do to help you
- Respect your wishes in assisting you to deal with your situation
- Explore your housing options with you
- Give you information about other agencies that can help you
- Consider your specific circumstances
- Listen without judging you

### **What PHP won't do:**

We won't:

- Tell you what you should do next
- Pressure you into agreeing to anything that makes you uncomfortable
- Normally ask you for evidence to prove that you have suffered from Domestic Violence

## How can PHP help me?

This will depend on your specific circumstances. There are several options available that may help you, and we can discuss these with you. We won't make the decision for you or pressure you into making a particular decision, and we won't do anything without agreeing it with you first.

PHP can offer practical support to you in three ways:

- Provide support if you would like to stay in your own home
- Advise you on your re-housing options if you want to move
- Advise you how to seek emergency accommodation

## How can PHP support me to stay in my own home?

- We can explore ways to make your property more secure for you. For example making sure your windows and doors are really secure. We may be able to provide you with an alarm to summon help quickly.
- We can refer you to a Tenancy Support Officer who will discuss with you how they can best support you in dealing with the complex issues that you face. They will meet with you at regular intervals, at a place where you feel safe, to talk through the issues that are affecting you and make sure you are fully informed about your options. They can also liaise with other agencies on your behalf.
- We can refer you to other agencies that may be able to assist you, such as the Poole Domestic Violence Outreach Project.
- PHP has included a section about domestic violence in the tenancy conditions. We can discuss with you taking action against the person who is hurting you (known as the perpetrator) under the terms of the tenancy conditions. This could ultimately mean evicting the perpetrator.

- PHP may be able to go to court to get an 'injunction' against the perpetrator (either a sole tenant or a joint tenant with you) of the domestic violence. This is an order from the Court that places restrictions on someone's behaviour. If the person breaches their injunction, they can be arrested. You do not have to go to Court to apply for the injunction. This type of injunction is most appropriate when the perpetrator of the violence does not live with you.
- We will ensure that any repairs that need to be done to the property as a result of the domestic violence are done promptly and are not re- charged where the perpetrator does not live at, or has left the property. We will normally need a Police Crime Number to do this. Your Housing Officer or Tenancy Support Officer will discuss this with you. Please note that where the perpetrator has returned to live at the property repairs will become re-chargeable.

## What about the tenancy?

- **If the tenancy is in your partner's name** there are legal orders which can help protect you from a violent partner. You can also apply for an order to allow you to continue living in the property. We can give you details of local solicitors who can advise you.
- **If the tenancy is in your name** but your partner is refusing to leave you can apply for an 'ouster order' and /or an 'injunction' to prevent the perpetrator from entering your home. We can give you details of local solicitors who can advise you. You can also choose to end your tenancy if you no longer want to live at the property – but we would advise you not to do this before seeking advice from your Housing Officer or from your solicitor.
- **If the tenancy is in joint names** you will need legal advice from a solicitor specialising in Family Law. You can apply to the court to have the tenancy transferred into your sole name. You can also choose to end your tenancy if you no longer want to live at the property – but we would advise you not to do this before seeking advice from your Housing Officer or from your solicitor.

## What about my rent?

If the tenant (who is the perpetrator) has left the property and is not paying the rent, you should apply for housing benefit to prevent rent arrears accumulating.

If you are away from home as a result of domestic violence, for example staying in a refuge, but do intend to return to your home, you may be entitled to housing benefit for up to 52 weeks.

Where you are not intending to return to your home, and have identified alternative accommodation, but you are still responsible for paying the rent at your old home (perhaps for the notice period), housing benefit can be paid for up to four weeks.

Housing Benefits at Borough of Poole must be advised even if you have left the property temporarily. They can give you advice that is specific to your circumstances.

## What if I need to move?

You may wish to consider a transfer to another property within the Borough of Poole or to another area of Dorset or of the country to get away from the perpetrator.

If you want to move to another area of Poole your case will be presented to the 'priority panel' to consider awarding you the extra priority that you need to be able to transfer to another property. We will talk to you about the information that we need to do this.

We can also talk to you about ways that can help you move further afield.

## **What if I need to stay somewhere immediately?**

We can refer you to a Housing Advisor at Housing and Community Services (HCS) at Borough of Poole if you cannot return to your home, either immediately or if you want to make plans to leave in the longer term. You can also contact Poole's Women's Refuge or the Male Refuge – the phone numbers are at the back of this leaflet.

HCS can also advise you if you have had to leave your property in a hurry and need practical assistance with obtaining money or clothes for example.

## **How do I arrange to talk to someone?**

You can contact the Housing Officer Team on 01202 264411 or the Tenancy Support Team on 01202 264419. We will arrange an appointment for you within 24 hours or the next working day at a place where you feel comfortable to talk.

## **What if I am unhappy with the way PHP has handled a situation involving domestic violence?**

If you are unhappy about the way a situation involving domestic violence has been handled by a member of PHP staff, you may wish to follow our complaints procedure.

Please ask for our leaflet, 'Putting Things Right', or e-mail us at [comments.php@poole.gov.uk](mailto:comments.php@poole.gov.uk). Please refer to your Tenant or Leaseholder Handbook for full details.

## Useful telephone numbers

Rents Team: PHP	01202 264434
Housing Benefits: Borough of Poole	01202 633114
Poole Domestic Violence Project	01202 710777
Poole Women's Refuge	01202 748488
Women's Aid 24hr Helpline	0808 2000 247
Broken Rainbow: advice and support for victims in same sex relationships	01202 257478
Dorset Police Domestic Violence Unit	01202 223362
Mankind: advice and support for male victims of domestic violence	0870 794 4124
Victim Support	01258 453100
Free Legal Advice Line for Women	020 7251 6577

### Leaving safely

- ➔ Try to keep a small amount of money on you at all times, including change for the phone or the bus
- ➔ If you don't have a mobile, find somewhere you can quickly and safely use the phone if you need to
- ➔ Take important documents with you, such as your marriage certificate, any Court Orders, passport, driving licence, benefit and bank books, and health records
- ➔ Have a small bag already packed with an extra set of keys for the house and car and try to include a pay-as-you-go mobile phone with credit on it, and children's comfort item, such as a teddy

- Pre-programme important numbers into your mobile, such as doctor, Police DV unit, women's refuge or other safe place to stay, children's schools, solicitor
- If you leave try and take your children with you
- Take essential medicines that you and your children may need
- Leave when it is safe to do so
- If you later discover that you have left something essential behind, you can always arrange for a police escort so that you can return for it