



SCRUTINY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

AGENDA ITEM: 5.1

DATE OF MEETING: 6 August 2014

REPORT AUTHOR: John Woodward, Interim Housing Solutions Manager

**SUBJECT: Domestic Violence in relation to the Council's Homelessness
Service**

PURPOSE:

1. Provide a summary of procedures regarding domestic violence cases presenting as homeless as well as data relating to the number of domestic cases handled by the homelessness service

REPORT:

Summary of procedures

2. The legislation and guidance that governs how Councils provide homelessness services is predominantly that laid down in the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities 2006, supplemented by guidance issued in 2009, 2011 and 2012 relating to intentionality, the Localism Act and suitability of accommodation respectively.
3. Relationship breakdown including domestic violence is one of the common causes of homelessness or potential homelessness. Persons experiencing domestic violence are able to approach the Council amongst other agencies for advice and also to explore options for temporary or permanent re-housing.
4. The services we provide are shown below. All persons approaching us are assessed initially by an Adviser via the drop-in facility within the Customer Service Centre and are then if necessary seen by a Housing Solutions Officer dependent on the case details and level of decision-making required.
 - Advice and assistance: persons are provided with as much advice and help as they need including: signposting and/ or referrals to appropriate local agencies/ support providers/ housing providers.
 - The commonest referrals are to the Women's Aid refuge: for the last two years the number of such referrals has been between 10-15 per year
 - Recommending use of the 'Homesafe scheme' which assists a person who is at risk of violence from someone who either still lives in the same property or

has since left but occasionally returns; enables them to be able to remain in their own home in safety and without fear of further harm. Working together with the Police we help the person receive the support, information and equipment needed to remain living at home and feeling safe. Homesafe can provide: replacement locks, door modifications and/or replacement, new window fittings, panic alarm, mobile phone and letterbox security; if necessary a safe room can also be created.

- Temporary accommodation: provided in cases where persons are fleeing violence. This form of accommodation is managed by the Housing Services teams within the Housing Service.
 - Permanent accommodation: if in the circumstances of the case we decide we have a responsibility to arrange for accommodation to be provided, we will work with the person to arrange that accommodation to be provided usually in the social stock in the area and sometimes in the private rented sector
 - As specialist support services exist locally (e.g. Women's Aid Refuge, Social Services) staff in the Housing Solutions and Housing Services teams will constantly liaise with those services during the life of a particular case
5. Specifically in relation to Council tenants, an option available to Council Housing Services staff dealing with domestic violence cases as part of their housing management function is to rely on dealing with the matter via a breach in the terms of the tenancy agreement.
6. Support and domestic violence policy updates for our Housing Solutions staff on domestic violence issues are continuously available via e.g. local agencies such as Women's Aid Refuge and the Council's Safeguarding team. Staff guidance was recently updated when adopting in 2014 the newest reporting and assessment frameworks of the Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence (DASH); formal training is provided to staff periodically the last being 2012.

Data relating to the number of domestic cases

7. At appendix 1 is a table showing the number of domestic violence cases handled by the Housing Solutions service over the last two years.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

None

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: Number of domestic violence Homelessness decisions

APPENDIX 1

Number of domestic violence Homelessness decisions

Homelessness Decisions		2012/13	2013/14
Duty to re-house accepted		69	68
Duty to re-house not accepted	Ineligible	4	3
	Intentionally homeless	0	1
	Not homeless	34	32
	Not in priority need	2	2
Total		109	106

Ineligible: e.g. certain categories of persons from abroad. Support to persons (with or without children) with no recourse to public funds is assessed and provided by Social Services following a referral from the Housing Solutions service.

Intentionally homeless: e.g. caused or contributed to their own homelessness

Not homeless: e.g. had accommodation they could have reasonably accessed

Not in priority need: not falling within one of the needs categories (e.g. of needs category: family with young children)