****

**Domestic / Interpersonal Violence Policy Notes**

**Purpose**

Domestic violence (also referred to as spouse abuse, battering, wife beating, among other terms) is intentional violent or controlling behaviour by a person who is currently, or was previously, in an intimate relationship with a victim/survivor. Methods of coercion and control include humiliation, intimidation, fear and often intentional physical, emotional or sexual injury. This definition recognises that men may be victims of domestic violence. However, it should be noted that all research, past and current, points to the preponderance of female victims and male perpetrators. Domestic violence may occur in same sex relationships and occurs regardless of race, creed, religion, culture, socio-economic group, or level of education.

Interpersonal violence is a much broader term which describes any form of violence by someone known to the victim. It usually reflects from 'the abuse of power or the domination or victimisation of a physically less powerful person by a physically more powerful person'. Power and control is at the heart of these relationships and is displayed through physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, economic, and spiritual abuse.

**Examples of Interpersonal violence include:**

* Adult rape
* Child sexual abuse
* Elder abuse
* Family violence
* Forced marriage
* Female genital mutilation
* Prostituting and trafficking of women, men, those who are transgendered and children.

Research indicates that many people involved in prostitution have experienced some form of violence, either from their intimate partner, a client, "pimp" or from someone close to them. As practitioners we need to understand the implications of this and ensure that our working practices are based on trust and respect.

**Practical application**

* Encourage an holistic understanding of violence within the project of what many involved in prostitution have experienced, specifically that it is not a personal problem. Operating from this standpoint will enable project workers to communicate that the violence service users have experienced is "not their fault" and help them confront some of the root issues.
* Confidentiality is crucial. Give your assurance to your service users that any information given will remain confidential and will only be given to other agencies (e.g. the police and Social Services), if either they or a child are at risk. Check if it is all right to send letters or phone the person at home/on their mobile.
* Perpetrators have been known to be very persistent in their determination to find their former/current partners. Never give out contact details or even confirm that the person is known to yourself or the project.
* Establish whether an interpreter needs to be arranged through Language Line, rather than wait for this to be requested. Young children should not be used for interpretation. If you are not able to supply the appropriate interpreter quickly enough, you can use private individuals or other family members in an emergency. You should arrange an interpreter for any subsequent interviews.
* Adopt a victim centred approach - the safety of the service user is of paramount concern. Although initial action is not dependent on obtaining evidence, subsequent action against the perpetrator may be impossible without some evidence from third parties. For example, a judge will only grant a Possession Order if s/he thinks that it is reasonable to do so based on the evidence submitted to the Court.
* It is important to be aware of the effects of being brought up with different backgrounds, for example, in many cultures domestic violence is not publicly acknowledged.
* Conduct interviews in private and at a place of safety. Do this in a sympathetic and non-judgmental manner.
* Keep accurate and up-to-date records, including details of contact with any other agencies and third party evidence with the service user's consent.
* Give the service user details of outside agencies who may be able to offer support and counselling.
* Encourage the service user to report the matter to the police. However, this should not be a pre-condition for further action being taken.
* Establish whether there is an injunction against the perpetrator in force and if so, encourage the client to contact the police to advise that it has been broken.