



# Dorset successful in bid for funding Specialist Domestic Violence Courts

**Dorset has been successful in its bid for funding to help establish Specialist Domestic Violence Courts in Bournemouth and Weymouth.**

A total of £40,000 has been awarded to help develop Specialist Domestic Violence Courts in Dorset, which is planned to be used to develop an Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy service.

This service uses Independent Domestic Violence Advisors who give professional support to victims of offences such as physical assault, sexual abuse, rape and threats throughout the process of their case.

The Advisors will also ensure that the safety of the victim is looked after across the criminal justice system while giving expert advice on accessing essential services such as victim and witness agencies, housing, health, counselling and child care.

The Specialist Domestic Violence Court Programme is an approach which focuses on the way the courts and the Criminal Justice System deal with these cases as part of a coordinated community response to tackling domestic violence.

Through the new Specialist Domestic Violence Courts criminal justice agencies in Dorset will work together to identify, track and risk assess domestic violence cases and better share information so that more offenders are brought to justice, victims are protected and better supported and further violence is prevented.

John Revell, Dorset's Chief Crown Prosecutor, said: "This is very exciting news. Sadly a great deal of domestic violence occurs. These courts have been shown to work. More offenders are

convicted and victims get much better support and assistance. This gives out a powerful message, and hopefully many potential offenders will think twice and not offend."

Rod Brummitt, Chairman of the Dorset Criminal Justice Board, explained that it is encouraging that more victims of domestic violence are now willing to come forward. He said: "In the past, many incidents of this nature went unreported because of fear and intimidation. But now victims are increasingly confident that their situation will be dealt with sensitively and as a priority.

"However, this willingness to come forward has meant an increase in the number of cases. We need to address this and believe that the solution lies in a concerted multi-agency approach, together with the introduction of Specialist Domestic Violence Courts.



"We are delighted that our plan to implement this new system has been recognised and will be backed by investment in the necessary expertise to ensure justice in these serious cases."

Andy Hutchinson, Dorset Probation Assistant Chief Officer, said: "This provides a much needed focus on the protection of domestic violence victims. It will also reinforce the work with perpetrators to tackle and reduce their offending and highlight the need for local statutory and voluntary agencies to continue working effectively in partnership to do that."