



**REPORT of
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: SERVICES DELIVERY - PLACE AND COMMUNITY**

**to
STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
26 SEPTEMBER 2024**

DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To share details of the new Domestic Abuse Policy (the Policy) at **APPENDIX 1**, which relates to Residents of the Maldon District.
- 1.2 To inform the Committee of the new burdens that fall on Housing Services as a result of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Council:

- (i) that the Residents Domestic Abuse Policy (**APPENDIX 1**) be adopted, promoted and its processes incorporated into business-as-usual activities;
- (ii) That a 'Recognise, Respond and Refer Model' (**APPENDIX 2**) be adopted across all services giving a whole Council approach to how the Council responds to those reporting Domestic Abuse wherever that occurs.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 There are some 2.3 million victims of domestic abuse a year aged 16 to 74 (two-thirds of whom are women) and more than one in ten of all offences recorded by the police are domestic abuse related.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-bill-2020-factsheets/domestic-abuse-bill-2020-overarching-factsheet>
- 3.2 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 sets out a robust response to this, with additional responsibilities placed upon Local Housing Authorities:
 - 1 New Priority Need for those who have had to leave their home due to Domestic Abuse regardless of any other priority need for housing.
 - 2 Places a duty on local authorities to give support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and safe accommodation.
 - 3 Requires local authorities to grant new secure tenancies to social tenants leaving existing secure tenancies for reasons connected with domestic abuse.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The Maldon District Council Residents Domestic Violence Policy (**APPENDIX 1**) will support delivery of the Council's statutory obligations under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- 4.2 The Policy links with the Safeguarding Policy and Community Safety functions.
- 4.3 Adoption of the Policy supports the Council's work towards the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation.
- 4.4 The Policy is an essential tool which sets the context for the Council's work to protect and support those experiencing domestic abuse.

5. IMPACT ON PRIORITIES AS SET OUT IN THE CORPORATE PLAN 2023 - 2027

5.1 Supporting our communities

- 5.1.1 The Policy will strengthen the support for victims of abuse and promote a joint response with the Council's community safety partners.
- 5.1.2 A robust response to Domestic Abuse supports neighbouring residents who may be affected by anti-social behaviour which may be associated with Domestic Abuse.

5.2 Enhancing and connecting our place

- 5.2.1 The Policy promotes a belief that everyone has a right to live free from abuse and that it will not be tolerated in our communities. It promotes unified response across services, a better quality of life and supports residents to move on from abuse.

5.3 Helping the economy to thrive

- 5.3.1 According to the [GOV.UK \(2019, p. 6\)](#) the total cost for domestic abuse was £66,192m, and on average, it costs £34,015 to react to these incidents per victim, and up to £2.2m in cases of domestic homicide.
- 5.3.2 Women's refuges are not an option for those who are in work as funding is reliant on housing benefit being awarded. The Policy supports an approach to Domestic Abuse which supports the victims to safe accommodation whilst they are maintaining paid employment.
- 5.3.3 The Policy reduces costs to NHS, GPs and Mental Health Services by promoting early engagement with support services to avoid crisis.

5.4 Smarter finances

- 5.4.1 The Domestic Abuse Policy will support the training and development of all staff enabling the Council to deal with customers reporting Domestic Abuse at the first point of contact.
- 5.4.2 The Policy will promote Domestic Abuse Support Services before crisis thereby reducing escalation.

5.5 Provide good quality services.

- 5.5.1 Adoption of the Domestic Abuse Policy will promote a good quality response across all of the Council's services, whilst further enhancing the work of the Housing and Community Safety Teams.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – The Policy sets out processes that place protection around customers experiencing domestic violence and explains the level of service the Council aspires to. Adoption of the Policy is a clear message that Maldon District Council will take a stand on Domestic Abuse.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** - This policy applies to protection against Domestic Abuse of all Maldon District residents regardless of background or protected characteristics.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk (including Fraud implications)** - The Policy supports the Council's statutory duties of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 thereby reducing the risk of not fulfilling these.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** - Maldon District Council has Government grant funding to implement the new burdens of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 which will fund the Domestic Abuse Navigator and enhanced training for the housing team. Funding is also available for additional training for other teams which will be available as part of the Council's DAHA accreditation process.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** - Whilst the adoption of the Policy does not rely on additional human resource, recruitment of the Domestic Abuse Navigator has been difficult, however the Council has now successfully recruited and Ash Gurung joined the Housing Solutions Team on 18 September 2024.

Background Papers: None.

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