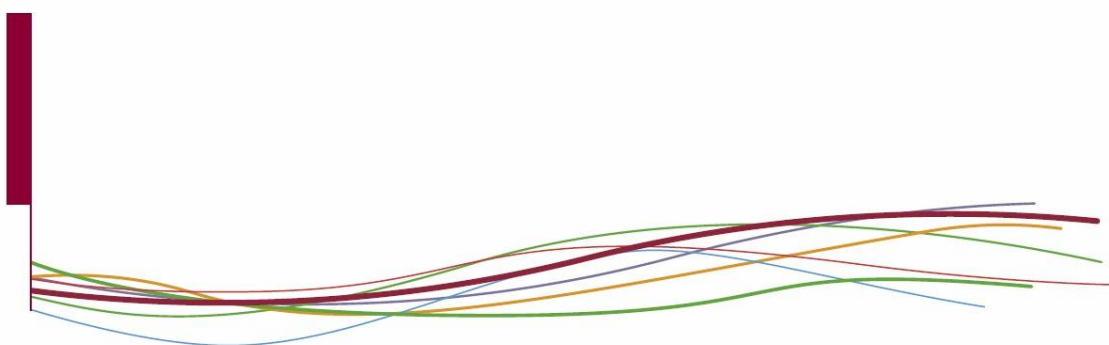


Maldon District Council

Domestic Abuse Policy

(Residents) 2024



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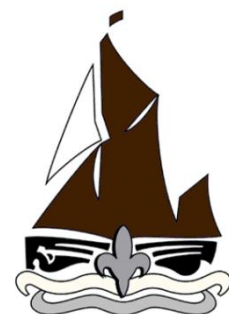
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Document Control Sheet

Document title	Maldon District Council Resident Domestic Abuse Policy
Summary of purpose	Detailing how the Council will provide support tailored to the needs of the individual, working in partnership with statutory and specialist agencies to provide a survivor-led coordinated response
Prepared by	Helen Greengrass, Housing Solutions Manager
Status	DRAFT
Version number	
Approved by	Council
Approval date	8 October 2024
Date of implementation	
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Validity Statement

This document is due for review by the date shown above, after which it may become invalid. Users of the strategy or policy should ensure that they are consulting the currently valid version of the document.



MALDON DISTRICT
COUNCIL

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Introduction & Policy Statement

Everyone has the right to live without fear of violence or abuse and Maldon District Council are committed to ensuring that all residents affected are supported in a sympathetic, supportive, and sensitive manner and that staff act in a non-judgemental way.

This policy explains how we provide support tailored to the needs of the individual, working in partnership with statutory and specialist agencies to provide a survivor-led coordinated response. We do this by understanding someone's personal journey while being an active part of a coordinated community response, standing together against domestic abuse.

We take all reports of domestic abuse seriously and a range of training is provided for staff to ensure a strong and supportive workforce culture around domestic abuse. All staff have access to basic awareness training with key members of staff undergoing enhanced training to equip them with skills to recognise the signs, respond and refer to appropriate support or guidance where necessary. These key members of staff are the Housing Team, Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSOs) and Domestic Abuse Champions who will support all staff across the organisation in concerns around domestic abuse.

We want to improve the safety of residents affected by domestic abuse and seek to help prevent further abuse by encouraging earlier reporting alongside an effective response.

Maldon District Council recognise that safe housing is one of the key barriers when separating from an abusive relationship or home. Our Housing Team have a key role to play within a partnered response.

Maldon District Council are Members of the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) and are committed to delivering a consistent approach to domestic abuse throughout the whole organisation.

Language and Terminology

For the purposes of this policy, we use the following terms.

Resident: those resident within our local authority area and those who are seeking housing within our local authority area.

Victim/Survivor: a resident or approaching resident who is experiencing domestic abuse, stalking or harassment related to domestic abuse.

Alleged Perpetrator/Perpetrator: a person who may be perpetrating abuse, harassment or stalking in the context of domestic abuse. Please note that a resident can only be referred to as a Perpetrator if they have a criminal conviction for domestic abuse. If this is unknown, the term, alleged perpetrator should be used. This is not intended to minimise the abuse that the victim/survivor may be experiencing but to ensure correct language and terminology is used in accordance with the law.

It is important that anyone affected by domestic abuse does not feel that their experience is defined by a label. Staff are encouraged to use names when speaking to them about their relationship to mediate against those feelings.

DSO: Designated Safeguarding Officer within Maldon District Council having had enhanced training to undertake this role.

DA Champion: is a staff member who is a named Domestic Abuse Champion and have undergone extra training to take on this role.

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Policy Aims

This policy aims to achieve the following:

Raise Awareness of Domestic Abuse

We will;

- actively promote awareness through various internal and external communication channels and support national campaigns.
- widely publicise information for victim/survivors on how to get help if they need it and the type of response, they can expect from us.
- raise the status of victim/survivors by ensuring their voices are heard and influence the services we deliver
- adopt a culture to demonstrate that it is okay to talk about this hidden crime and Maldon District Council is a safe place for residents to reach out and seek support.

Provide Training and Guidance

We will;

- ensure that all staff access basic awareness training through a rolling programme so that domestic abuse is always at the forefront of our minds, and we provide a consistent response across the Organisation.
- Ensure training will support staff to identify the signs of the domestic abuse and respond to any reports or disclosures.
- Ensure Housing Teams and those with Safeguarding responsibilities (including DSOs and DA Champions) receive enhanced training on risk assessment and responding to domestic abuse.
- Build a Domestic Abuse Champions Network who have also received enhanced training on assessment and responding to domestic abuse.

Ensure a Consistent and Coordinated Community Response

We will;

- work alongside statutory, commissioned and specialist agencies to adopt a consistent and coordinated community response.
- ensure those affected by domestic abuse are offered support through signposting and direct referrals to appropriate agencies.
- strive to ensure that alleged perpetrators/perpetrators of domestic abuse who recognise and seek to change their behaviour are offered support; to increase their motivation, skills, knowledge and build confidence and resilience to combat their abusive behaviour patterns.

Prioritise Safety and Security

We will;

- ensure we have staff who have received enhanced training will be able to deliver a risk assessment, using the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence (DASH) Risk Identification Check list.
- enhance the safety and security of those affected through sanctuary work at their home, with a view to increase confidence, resilience and empower them to live safely and independently
- utilise our own Safeguarding Policy and procedures to enhance safety.
- take appropriate action against those who choose to abuse individuals utilising all available powers within (but not limited to) the ASB Crime and Policing Act 2014.

Policy Scope

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines domestic abuse as **abusive behaviour** between two people over the age of 16 that are **personally connected** to one another.

Children

In the Domestic Abuse Act (2021), Children aged under 18 are also recognised as victims if they see, hear, or experience the effects of the abuse and either party involved is the parent, relative or has parental responsibilities for that child or children.

Abusive Behaviour

Abusive behaviour in the context of domestic abuse may encompass one or more of the following: -

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic abuse
- Psychological, emotional, or other abuse

Personally Connected

The relationship between both parties is a key factor and defined as those that are 'personally connected' to one another. This includes those that are currently or have previously been:-

- married or civil partners to each other.
- agreed to marry one another or within a civil partnership with each other regardless of whether the agreement is still in place.
- in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- shared parental responsibilities of the same child or children
- relatives

Additional Factors

It doesn't matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or part of an ongoing pattern of behaviour.

The policy is clear that victims are not confined to one gender, sexual orientation, or ethnic group.

The definition also includes (but is not limited to) modern day slavery, coercive control, honour-based violence, forced marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), stalking and harassment.

Coercive Control

Maldon District Council recognise that Domestic Abuse is often (but not always) built around control and coercive behaviour. These types of acts largely go unnoticed and can include making an individual subordinate / dependent, whilst being exploited for personal gain. This will, in some cases, mean the person is deprived of independence limiting their ability to escape from an abusive life.

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Coercive behaviour will be identified by our trained staff as a pattern of acts, including but not limited around humiliation, intimidation and fear which is used to harm, punish, or frighten the individual. This definition includes honour-based violence and abuse where there may be further perpetrators across the family and community.

Economic Abuse

Economic abuse is designed to limit someone's ability to be independent away from the Perpetrator of abuse.

Within this definition, economic abuse means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on that person's ability to do.

- Acquire, use, or maintain money or other property, or
- Obtain goods or services

Stalking

Leaving or separating from an abusive relationship offers no guarantee that the abuse will stop, and many victim/survivors are subjected to ongoing stalking. This may include behaviours such as:

- Following
- Loitering
- Monitoring
- Excessive phone calls and messages
- Unwanted attention and gifts

Working in Partnership

No single agency or professional has a complete picture of the life of an individual or family living with domestic abuse, however many will have insights that are crucial to their safety. Maldon District Council will adopt a collaborative approach with partner agencies when supporting people who are being abused.

- We will ensure the Victim/Survivor has access to the range of support services available to them. ***(Please see appendix A for a list of support services available)***
- With the consent of the victim/survivor, we may hold regular meetings with partner agencies to ensure that all supporting agencies and services are involved that should be.
- With the consent of the victim/survivor we will provide further information, signpost or refer to those requiring additional support.
- Whilst confidentiality should be maintained, we will ensure internal safeguarding procedures are followed if we become concerned that there may be a threat to life, risk of significant/imminent harm or harm to a child. For further information please refer to Maldon District Council's Safeguarding Policy.
- We will attend Multi Agency Risk Assessment (Marac) meetings and Child in Need / Child Protection meetings where appropriate.
- We will be active members of the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board [About SETDAB - Southend and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Partnership](#)

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How Maldon District Council respond to Victim/Survivors

We take all reports of domestic abuse seriously. Domestic abuse is a serious crime, and we will continually strive to treat people experiencing this form of abuse in a sympathetic, supportive, and non-judgemental way.

Maldon District Council adopt a 'Recognise, Respond and Refer Model' which will be cascaded across the organisation through regular training.

Recognise

Domestic Abuse may manifest or become visible in a variety of different ways:-

A member of staff may become concerned about a resident who is showing signs that they may be experiencing domestic abuse. This may include:-

- Changes in behaviour and demeanour
- Lack of engagement
- Damage to property
- Injury or pain
- Financial problems

A victim/survivor may report or disclose domestic abuse to us through any contact they have with us, for example by referring to the Contact Us page on our website, in person or in writing.

A fellow resident or neighbour may also report concerns.

Respond

We will ensure that the response to those reporting domestic abuse is consistent and that our services are accessible for all regardless of their identity or protected characteristics, providing interpreters and translating information into other languages or formats as needed.

The involvement of the Housing Team, DSO or a DA Champion should always be sought if any concerns or reports are raised around domestic abuse. These members of staff have had enhanced training and are equipped to advise and undertake any necessary risk assessment or referrals.

- In all cases, a resident should be offered time and a private space to talk about their current concerns where it can be identified what further action needs to be taken. The option to talk to a member of staff who is of the same gender can also be offered.
- With consent, of the victim/survivor, a trained staff member will carry out a risk assessment, using the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence (DASH) Risk Identification Checklist. The DASH risk assessment is a UK wide accredited form used by us and partner organisations to plan how we will support them and any children.
- Relevant advice and help, including information about alternative housing, additional security measures in the home and suitable support from specialist organisations should be offered where appropriate.
- We will acknowledge that safe housing is often one of the biggest barriers to separating from an abusive relationship

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- If the victim/survivor fears for their immediate safety and risk assessment identifies significant risk, we will help consider their housing options. This could include referral into a refuge or emergency accommodation.
- Where necessary, we will support the victim/survivor to access legal advice, including support for benefits and home rights advice.
- If the victim/Survivor needs to move home, we will work with them to identify areas that will minimise the risk of future abuse.

Safety and accountability will be at the centre of how we respond to domestic abuse. We will case manage in a safe and sensitive manner with trust and non-judgement at its core. This will be overseen by senior members of staff who will ensure that our approach is as we say, through regular case audits.

There is an additional Domestic Abuse Process for all staff to refer to when someone identifies themselves as experiencing domestic abuse and approaches Maldon District Council for help, support and advice.

How Maldon District Council responds to Alleged Perpetrators/Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse

If an alleged perpetrator/perpetrator of Domestic Abuse approaches Maldon District Council for assistance, we will ensure that this person is assessed in line with the homelessness policy and the allocations policy.

- With their consent, we will offer a referral into support services, such as The Change Hub or other relevant support services. This can only be if the person is willing to engage with the services and wants to change their behaviour.
- We will use relevant Safeguarding Procedures and legislation to ensure that our response continues to be focussed on the safety of the victim/survivor and any children who may also live in the home.
- Where necessary and where there is a duty to do so, we will support with interim emergency accommodation, ensuring that a risk assessment is carried out and that any offer of accommodation is not likely to put the victim/survivor or the wider community at risk.
- Where appropriate and when concerned about threat to life and risk of harm, we will check the details of the perpetrator with the police to ensure that all risks are known and taken into consideration.
- We will engage with partner agencies, discussing prolific perpetrators to ensure that all agencies are aware and involved if needs be, and prolific perpetrators are 'tracked' to prevent further abuse from occurring.

Legal Framework

There is a range of civil and criminal action that can be taken to protect people from domestic abuse. These vary according to the circumstances of individuals.

This policy supports the following legislation:

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Part IV of the Family Law Act 1996
- Domestic Abuse Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Housing Act 1996
- Crime and Security Act 2010 (Sections 24-33)
- Serious Crime Act 2015 (Section 76)
- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Care Act 2014
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Clare's Law 2017 (also known as Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS))
- Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Equality Act 2010

We won't pressure victims to take legal action but will ensure that individuals are aware of what action can be taken if this is something they wish to pursue and make referrals where necessary.

Monitoring & Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years. We will regularly review best practice, changes to legislation and feedback from our employees and customers, reviewing this policy as required more frequently to improve the way we work.

We value the views of our residents and will actively ask for feedback about the service we provide. We will listen to that feedback as well as regularly engage with local specialist domestic abuse agencies to improve the way in which we work when dealing with domestic abuse.

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Appendix A – Support Services

Local Support Services

CARA

Centre for action on rape and abuse – Essex based. Work with victims and survivors of sexual violence and child sexual abuse, providing independent, specialist support and promoting and representing their rights and needs.

Tel: 01206 769795

Website: [Centre for Action on Rape and Abuse in Essex - CARA \(caraessex.org.uk\)](http://caraessex.org.uk)

Compass

A partnership of domestic abuse services providing a response in Essex.

Helpline: 0330 333 7444. Helpline available from 8 am to 8 pm weekdays and 8am – 1pm weekends.

Website: www.essexcompass.org.uk

Next Chapter

Next Chapter is a domestic abuse charity working across the areas of Tendring, Colchester, Maldon, Chelmsford, Braintree & Uttlesford. We provide free and confidential services to support people who are currently experiencing or have previously experienced domestic abuse. This is a service for anyone who is experiencing domestic abuse, regardless of gender.

Helpline: Via Compass 0330 333 7444 Direct line: 01206 500 585

Website: www.thenextchapter.org.uk

Victim Support Essex

If you've been affected by crime, call Victim Support in Essex

Telephone: 0808 17 81 694 Lines are open 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Or 0808 16 89 111 If you need support outside of our open hours.

Website: www.victimsupport.org.uk/resources/essex

The Change Hub

Our charity has been delivering RESPECT accredited domestic violence perpetrator programmes since 2009. Through the behavioural change of the abuser we aim to increase the well-being of people who are, or have been, living with conflict or domestic violence & abuse.

Tel: 0845 3727701 / 01245 258680

Text: 07872 541982

Email: tcp@thechange-project.org

Website: www.thechange-project.org/the-change-hub

National Support Services

Action on Elder Abuse

Charity giving help and information about the abuse of older people, including abuse by family members and partners.

Helpline: 0808 808 8141 (Freephone)

Email: enquiries@elderabuse.org.uk

Website: www.elderabuse.org.uk

Broken Rainbow

For the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community.

Tel: 0300 999 5428.

Website: <https://www.brokenrainbow.org.uk/help/helpline/>

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Childline

The UK's free and confidential helpline is not just for children. They also offer help to young people up to the age of 19 who are in distress or danger.

Tel: 0800 11 11 (24-hour helpline)

Website: www.childline.org.uk

Finding Legal Options for Women Survivors (FLOWS)

FLOWS gives legal advice to women who are affected by domestic abuse - they also give advice to front line workers.

Website: www.rcjadvice.org.uk/family/flows-finding-legal-options-for-women-survivors

Freedom Charity

We aim to empower young people to feel they have the tools and confidence to support each other and have practical ways in which they can help their best friend around the issues of family relationships which can lead to early and forced marriage and dishonour-based violence. The Helplines are manned by trained professionals to help victims of forced marriage and their friends who are seeking help, support and advice.

24/7 Helpline: 0845 607 0133

Textline (text '4freedom' to 88802)

Website: www.freedomcharity.org.uk

Galop

Galop offers support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people experiencing hate crime, sexual violence or domestic abuse.

Helpline: 0800 999 5428 (Monday and Thursday 10am-8pm, Tuesday and Wednesday 10am-5pm, Friday 1pm-5pm).

Email: help@galop.org.uk

Website: www.galop.org.uk

Hourglass

Hourglass gives confidential advice and information to older people who are victims of violence or abuse. A relative or friend of the person being abused can also contact the helpline on behalf of the older person. The helpline can be used in the case of older people who live at home, in a care home or who are in hospital.

Website: wearehourglass.org

Honour Network - Karma Nirvana

Karma Nirvana is a registered Charity that supports victims and survivors of forced marriage and honour-based abuse.

Telephone Number: 0800 5999 247

Email Address: info@karmanirvana.org.uk

Website: <https://www.karmanirvana.org.uk>

ManKind Initiative

The ManKind Initiative is a charity offering information and support to men who are victims of domestic abuse or violence. This can include information and support on reporting incidents, police procedures, housing, benefits and injunctions. They can refer you to a refuge, local authority or other another support service if you need it.

Website: new.mankind.org.uk

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The National Centre for Domestic Violence

provides a free, fast emergency injunction service for survivors of domestic violence regardless of their financial circumstances, race, gender or sexual orientation.

Freephone: 0800 970 2070

Text: NCDV to 60777 (they will call you back)

Email: office@ncdv.org.uk

Website www.ncdv.org.uk

National Stalking Helpline

The National Stalking Helpline can provide advice on how to deal with any type of stalking behaviour. This includes advice on how to report the behaviour to the police, and what you can expect if you report something.

Website: www.stalkinghelpline.org

Rape Crisis

Rape Crisis (England and Wales) is an umbrella organisation for Rape Crisis Centres across England and Wales. The website has contact details for centres and gives basic information about rape and sexual violence for survivors, friends, family, students and professionals. Rape Crisis (England and Wales) also runs a freephone helpline.

Tel: 0808 500 2222 24/7

Website: [Rape Crisis England & Wales](http://RapeCrisisEngland&Wales)

Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Centres

Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Centres offer a range of services for women and girls who have been raped or experienced another form of sexual abuse.

National Freephone helpline: 0808 802 9999 (12 noon-2:30pm and 7pm-9.30pm any day of the year. Also 3pm – 5:30pm on weekdays)

Refuge

Supports women, children & men experiencing domestic violence with a range of services. Telephone Number: 0808 2000 247

Website: <https://www.refuge.org.uk>

Respect

Respect is a charity which runs support services and programmes for those who inflict abuse in relationships including young men and women.

Phoneline: 0808 802 4040 Monday to Friday 9am-5pm

Email: info@respectphoneline.org.uk

Website: www.respectphoneline.org.uk (incl. online chat service)

Respect Mens Advice Line

Respect also provides an advice line for men who are victims of an abusive relationship.

Men's Advice Line: 0808 801 0327 Monday to Friday 9am-5pm

Email: info@mensadviceline.org.uk

Website: www.mensadviceline.org.uk (incl. online chat service)

Rights of Women

Rights of Women offers confidential legal advice on domestic and sexual violence. You can find out more about what they do and when they're open on their website.

Website: www.rightsofwomen.org.uk

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Relate

Offers advice, relationship counselling, sex therapy, workshops, mediation, consultations and support face-to-face, by phone and through their website.

Helpline: 0300 100 1234

Website: www.relate.org.uk

Respond

Respond work with children and adults with learning disabilities who've either experienced abuse or abused other people.

Website: www.respond.org.uk

Sharan Project (South Asian Women Help & Support)

Information Line: 0844 504 3231

Website: www.sharan.org.uk

SignHealth - Domestic Abuse Service

SignHealth provides a specialist domestic abuse service to help Deaf people find safety and security. You can find out how to contact them on their website.

Website: www.signhealth.org.uk/with-deaf-people/domestic-abuse/domestic-abuse-service

Southall Black Sisters

Southall Black Sisters provide advice for Black (Asian and African-Caribbean) women with issues including domestic abuse, forced marriage, immigration and homelessness.

Website: www.southallblacksisters.org.uk

The Traveller Movement – safe space for women

Information and support for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller women

Website: [Home - Space for Women - Support for GRT women \(travellermovement.org.uk\)](http://Home-SpaceforWomen-SupportforGRTwomen(travellermovement.org.uk))

Email: women@travellermovement.org.uk

Victim Support

Confidential support for all victims of crime and domestic abuse.

Support Helpline: 0808 1689111

Website: www.victimsupport.org.uk (24/7 help chat line)

Women's Aid

Women's Aid is a national charity which works to end abuse against women and children.

Tel: 0808 2000 247 (Freephone 24-hour national domestic abuse helpline)

Email: helpline@womensaid.org.uk

Website: www.womensaid.org.uk