



## Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council Residents Domestic Abuse Policy

### 1 Policy Summary

- 1.1 Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council (BDBC) is committed to raising awareness of domestic abuse and fulfilling its duty of care to all residents. The Council is White Ribbon and Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accredited.
- 1.2 Hampshire County Council (HCC), as the upper tier local authority, commissions domestic abuse accommodation and community support to victims/survivors of domestic abuse across the County, including in Basingstoke. BDBC works in partnership and cooperates with HCC enabling a range of safe accommodation options that provide self-contained 'semi-independent' accommodation, with support, as an alternative to refuge provision.
- 1.3 We will support residents who disclose experiences of domestic abuse. We will foster an environment that is open and supportive of anyone living with domestic abuse and seek to ensure that victims and survivors of abuse are not only listened to, but also feel heard in the Council's response.
- 1.4 Domestic abuse is a serious crime, and we believe no person should live in fear of violence or abuse. This policy sets out our commitment to residents to deal efficiently and effectively with all reports of incidents of domestic abuse. We will work in partnership with specialist agencies providing a coordinated response and deliver tailored support to individuals reporting incidences of domestic abuse.
- 1.5 We understand that there are many barriers to reporting domestic abuse. We will encourage residents affected to raise the issue in the knowledge that we will treat the matter empathetically and confidentially. Our approach is trauma-informed, and we will always endeavour to treat people experiencing domestic abuse in a sympathetic, supportive and non-judgemental way.
- 1.6 We will publicise information on our domestic abuse offer to all residents, via the Council's website and via media campaigns. We will advise where they can get the help they need and the offer they can expect from us. We are White Ribbon accredited and will continue to actively support national campaigns and increase awareness locally around domestic abuse.



## 2 Scope of Policy

2.1 This policy applies to all residents of Basingstoke and Deane, regardless of their tenure. We have a separate Domestic Abuse Policy for employees experiencing domestic abuse.

2.2 The Home Office definition of domestic abuse is:

*Any single incident, course of conduct or pattern of abusive behaviour between individuals aged 16 or over who are “personally connected” to each other as a result of being, or having been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. Children who see, hear or experience the effects of the abuse and are related to either of the parties are also considered victims of domestic abuse*

2.3 Behaviour is abusive if it consists of any of the following:

- Physical or sexual abuse.
- Violent or threatening behaviour.
- Controlling or coercive behaviour.
- Economic abuse.
- Psychological abuse.
- Emotional abuse.

2.4 This includes incidents where the abusive party directs their behaviour at another person (e.g., a child).

2.5 Physical abuse includes slapping, burning, beating, kicking, biting, pinching, stabbing and other violent behaviours; these can lead to permanent injuries or death.

2.6 Sexual abuse or assault is when someone intentionally touches another person in a sexual manner, without that person’s consent.

2.7 Controlling behaviour includes a range of acts designed to make a person feel subordinate and/or dependent by actions that isolates them from sources of support, exploits their resources and capacities for personal gain, and deprives them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

2.8 Coercive behaviour includes an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.



- 2.9 Economic abuse means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on someone's ability to acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or obtain goods or services.
- 2.10 Psychological abuse, including emotional abuse, may take the form of intimidation, coercion, threats, harassment, humiliation, bullying, swearing or shouting. It also could be enforced social isolation (for example, preventing someone from accessing a service or seeing friends), failure to respect privacy/dignity or online bullying.
- 2.11 This definition includes so-called "honour"-based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.
- 2.12 "Personally connected" is defined in the Act as people who:
- Are married to each other.
  - Are civil partners of each other.
  - Have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement is still in place).
  - Have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement is still in place).
  - Are, or have been in an intimate personal relationship with each other.
  - Are, or have been, parents of the same child or children.
  - Are relatives.
- 2.13 It does not matter whether the behaviours consist of a single incident or part of an ongoing pattern of behaviour.
- 2.14 If a resident tells us about abuse in other circumstances, such as abuse by a carer, we will consider appropriate action under our Safeguarding Policy.

### **3 Our Policy Aims**

- 3.1 To ensure that all residents, not just those residents experiencing domestic abuse, are aware of the Council's policy, its implications and where to get advice, including residents who are perpetrating domestic abuse.
- 3.2 To ensure that all residents who ask for help in addressing domestic abuse can access appropriate advice and support, including signposting to other agencies.
- 3.3 To ensure that all residents experiencing domestic abuse and seeking assistance are confident that their situation will be handled sympathetically and confidentially.



- 3.4 To ensure that trained staff can access guidance on how to support and assist residents asking for help in relation to domestic abuse, both victims/survivors and perpetrators.
- 3.5 To set out a framework for responding to a resident who is identified as being a perpetrator of domestic abuse.
- 3.6 We will work in partnership and collaboratively with relevant and specialist services when responding to incidents of domestic abuse, taking into account each resident's personal circumstances and what different course of action and outcomes maybe possible and appropriate.

#### **4 Supporting a resident experiencing domestic abuse**

- 4.1 We take all reports of domestic abuse seriously and have a dedicated staff team trained to deal with reports of domestic abuse. All residents who experience domestic abuse will be treated with dignity and respect, and their disclosure will be taken seriously. By adopting appropriate practices and policies, the Council will make every effort to support residents who experience domestic abuse.
- 4.2 You can report domestic abuse to us through any contact you have with us, for example through our website, by telephone, by email, in person or in writing. If you find yourself in an emergency, you should contact the police on 999.
- 4.3 We have a dedicated team of specially trained staff to deal with disclosures of domestic abuse and our approach is trauma-informed. Our staff are trained to recognise the signs of domestic abuse when having conversation with customers and they are aware of how to act and report any concerns in a confidential and sensitive manner.
- 4.4 **Our offer to you:**
  - If you report an incident of domestic abuse to us, we will respond within one working day and will discuss the next steps with you.
  - We will offer you a meeting with a trained member of staff and will have regard to your circumstances and preferences, wherever possible, when allocated that member of staff. e.g., offering the option of a meeting with a staff member of the gender requested by you.
  - We will carry out/facilitate a risk assessment in accordance with DASH 2009 risk model, a UK-wide accreditation form used by partners organisations to plan how survivors and children will be supported.
  - We will agree with you how you wish to communicate with us, e.g., by phone, in our offices or another safe space, video call or in writing.



- We will take into account the needs of each individual case and recognise our response needs to be based on a risk assessment of your personal circumstances. We will advise about the possible course of actions open to you, which may require a response to an immediate situation or/and support in the longer term.
- We will make sure the survivor of domestic abuse is always aware of our response and that they agree any actions, including referrals to specialist support, community-based support, target hardening/sanctuary support, and offers of accommodation.
- We will provide advice and assistance around alternative accommodation, including refuge and move-on, liaise with your landlord regarding additional security measures in your home, if following a risk assessment, this is a safe option.
- We appreciate that survivors of domestic abuse may not want to take legal action, but we will offer advice if it is something they wish to pursue. This may include helping the survivor to access legal advice around molestation orders, and we will liaise with landlords around tenancy matters and possession proceedings.
- We recognise that we are a 'non-stock holding' local authority but are committed to proactively work in partnership with our registered providers to consider the housing options of victims/survivors, including temporary or a permanent transfer if there is no prospect of a safe return, in accordance with allocation and tenancy policies.
- We will, where appropriate, safeguard adults and children who experience domestic abuse. Employees are trained in safeguarding referrals, and referrals will be in line with our Safeguarding Policy.
- Our support will continue until the survivor is satisfied their situation has been resolved.

Our support will be based on your individual needs. We recognise that not all people see themselves as victims and we will ensure that we do not label you as such and will always treat people experiencing domestic abuse in a sympathetic, supportive, and non-judgemental way.

## **5 Partnership Working**

- 5.1 We will keep an up-to-date directory of domestic abuse services, available on our website detailing the wide range of local and national agencies offering advice, information, and support for victims/survivors. This can be found here: <https://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/domestic-abuse-directory>.
- 5.2 We will work collaboratively with agencies and partners in Basingstoke and Deane when responding to incidents of domestic abuse.



5.3 We will work proactively in partnership with local agencies regarding support service available locally including:

- participating and sharing information through the Multi Agency Risk Management Conference (MARAC) and Hampshire Police.
- Influencing and agreeing strategic priorities with Hampshire County Council (commissioner of DA Services in Basingstoke) through Hampshire DA Partnership.
- The Community Safety Partnership
- Chairing and facilitating the North Hampshire Domestic Abuse Forum.

5.4 We will work in partnership with appropriate agencies to support or signpost perpetrators of domestic abuse who recognise and want to change their behaviour.

5.5 We will never force our residents to share information they do not want to and respect our customers' right to privacy.

5.6 In the course of our work, we may need to share some information with other organisations. We will only share information with the survivor's permission, unless there is the risk to the safeguarding of children or a vulnerable adult and it is a duty of care.

## **6 Feedback**

6.1 We recognise the importance of listening to the views of our residents to improve services and the way we work when dealing with domestic abuse. We will do this through informal conversations, working groups and work we will be doing with HCC around survivor voice.

## **7 Equalities**

7.1 We recognise that domestic abuse is a gendered crime and disproportionately affects women and is perpetrated by men.

7.2 We are committed to ensure our services are accessible to everyone and residents can access services in the way they need. Residents can report domestic abuse in a variety of ways and the Council website enables translation into other languages and different formats like accessible PDF, large print, easy read, audio recording or braille. We can also arrange independent translators and interpreters, when required.

7.3 We recognise that domestic abuse occurs across society, regardless of age, sex, gender identity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage/civil partnership, disability, pregnancy, wealth, level of education and geography.



- 7.4 We appreciate that survivors' experience of domestic abuse may in part be defined by their background. (Economic status, gender, sexual orientation, ability, age, religion, ethnicity or immigration status). We acknowledge this and will recognise this intersectionality and appreciate that some survivors may face multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination. We will consider the individual needs of each survivor when tailoring our approach.
- 7.5 Domestic abuse can affect anyone, some survivors might be disproportionately affected or particularly vulnerable and some groups are affected by specific forms of domestic abuse. We also understand there are cultural and other barriers to reporting domestic abuse. We will take all of this into account in the support we provide.
- 7.6 We will train employees to understand how domestic abuse differently affects individuals and work in partnership with specialist providers to take action and make sure survivors get the right support. We will partner with and support local organisations with all the relevant experience and understanding in order to better support survivors needs.

## **8 Perpetrator Accountability**

- 8.1 We will take a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse and will hold perpetrators of abuse to account. Our approach is survivor-centred, and we will consider the views and ongoing safety of the individual when deciding the most appropriate course of action.
- 8.2 We will encourage and support perpetrators to address violent and abusive behaviour of all kinds and refer to specialist support services.

## **9 Consultation, approval and review**

- 9.1 This policy was developed in collaboration with local survivors of domestic abuse and violence.
- 9.2 This policy will be reviewed every three years and updated when required in light of legislation changes and feedback from our staff and residents to improve the way we work.



## 10 Policy Context

Corporate Strategy	This policy supports Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council Corporate Plan.
Legislation - This policy supports the following legislation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003;</li> <li>• Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014;</li> <li>• Care Act 2014;</li> <li>• Crime and Security Act 2010;</li> <li>• Data Protection Act 2018;</li> <li>• Domestic Abuse Act 2021;</li> <li>• Domestic Abuse Crime and Victims Act 2004;</li> <li>• Equality Act 2010;</li> <li>• Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996;</li> <li>• Health and Safety at Work Act 1974;</li> <li>• Housing Act 1996;</li> <li>• Local Government Act 1972;</li> <li>• Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992;</li> <li>• Policing and Crime Act 2009;</li> <li>• Protection from Harassment Act 1997;</li> <li>• Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995;</li> <li>• Serious Crime Act 2015.</li> </ul>
Related Policies – this policy links to the following policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocation Policy</li> <li>• Anti-social Behaviour and Hate Crime Policy</li> <li>• Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership Strategy</li> <li>• Data Protection Policy</li> <li>• Hampshire Safeguarding Adult Board (HSAB)</li> <li>• Safeguarding Policy</li> </ul>
Related Documents – links to the following documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BDBC Staff Domestic Abuse Policy</li> <li>• White Ribbon</li> </ul>



## 11 Guide Governance

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