

Public
Key Decision – Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Supporting Residents - Domestic Abuse Policy

Meeting/Date: O&S (Environment, Communities & Partnerships)
– 4 April 2024
Cabinet – 16 April 2024

Executive Portfolio: Cllr Stephen Ferguson
Executive Councillor for Customer Services

Report by: Jon Collen
Housing Needs & Resources Manager

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

The purpose of the policy is to set out how the Council supports residents who are experiencing domestic abuse. It explains how this is aligned with safeguarding responsibilities and how officers work with other relevant agencies, where appropriate, to support and help residents experiencing domestic abuse.

It also aims to improve staff confidence in identifying and dealing with domestic abuse and links to the internal looking Domestic Abuse Staff Support Policy which covers how the Council support staff who may be affected by domestic abuse. The staff policy has recently been adopted through the Employment Committee.

Both policies have been developed following good practice from the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA), the leading specialist domestic abuse organisation supporting Councils and housing providers to improve their response to domestic abuse.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet is

RECOMMENDED

to approve the Supporting Residents - Domestic Abuse Policy.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To present the Council's Supporting Residents – Domestic Abuse Policy for consideration and approval.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council already responds to residents experiencing domestic abuse in many types of situations. The most common of these is where a resident requires advice and assistance regarding their housing rights and options when wanting to leave an abusive relationship, although this is not the only type of situation. The Policy explains how the Council will treat all reports of domestic abuse with respect, sympathy and confidentiality and will listen to the needs and wishes of the victim in agreeing an appropriate course of action. The safety and security of those experiencing domestic abuse will always be the paramount consideration.
- 2.2 The Policy also explains how the Council will ensure that residents are linked into specialist support providers where necessary and how we work with a range of other agencies to ensure that victims are fully supported. This multi-agency network also extends to collaborative working to manage certain perpetrators and the risks that they may pose.
- 2.3 The Council has joined the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) which supports Councils and housing providers to improve their response to domestic abuse, through a membership model, accreditation framework and training packages. Their framework and model of response to domestic abuse is nationally recognised as best practice, through the Domestic Abuse Act Statutory Guidance 2022, and is endorsed by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England & Wales. This Policy follows the DAHA good practice model and we will be working towards full DAHA accreditation in 2024.
- 2.4 By embedding best practice and approving policies that demonstrate our response to domestic abuse, the Council is demonstrating a commitment to supporting our residents and staff in the best way possible.
- 2.5 Domestic abuse is one of the forms of abuse that comes under our safeguarding responsibilities, and approving and embedding this Policy demonstrates how we will work towards meeting our safeguarding and statutory duties, as well as enhancing partnership and collaboration to deliver an effective and safe response to anyone experiencing domestic abuse.

3. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 3.1 The Panel discussed the Support Residents, Domestic Abuse Policy at its meeting on 4th April 2024.
- 3.2 Following a question from Councillor Harvey, the Panel were assured that the team undertook work and liaised with multiple partners including charities as appropriate to residents needs.

- 3.3 In response to a question from Councillor Bywater, the Panel heard that the Council had a good relationship with local housing providers and that many social landlords were also working towards the same DAHA accreditation as the Council.
- 3.4 Further to a question from Councillor Hunt, the Panel heard that the team were working hard to meeting the accreditation requirements and were working with the assessor to ensure compliance. It was also observed that training would be rolled out for both staff and Councillors later in the year.
- 3.5 Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for an informed decision to be made on the report recommendations

4. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 The completion of this policy links to the Corporate Plan Priority 'Improving quality of life for local people', under the 'Helping people in crisis' outcome.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The policy has been developed in consultation with the DAHA advisor who is assisting as we work towards accreditation. Learning from other Councils that are more advanced in the accreditation process, and development of these types of policies, has also come through our membership of a Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Domestic Abuse Officer group.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There will be no additional resource implications with implementing this Policy, and activities relating to this are already undertaken by existing teams and partnerships which are already established.

7. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 7.1 Approval of this Policy underlines the Council's commitment to helping residents who may be experiencing domestic abuse, and reaffirms our partnership approach to working with other agencies to ensure a safe and appropriate co-ordinated response.
- 7.2 It links strongly to the Corporate Plan Priorities, specifically helping to improve the quality of life for local people, particularly where they are at a point of crisis.

8. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 - Supporting Residents - Domestic Abuse Policy

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance](#)

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