

<b>Communities Committee Meeting</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> November 2022
<b>Report Title</b>	Draft Swale Domestic Abuse Policy
<b>EMT Lead</b>	Emma Wiggins
<b>Head of Service</b>	Charlotte Hudson
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Stephanie Curtis, Community Safety Manager
<b>Classification</b>	<b>Open</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	1. That the Communities Committee agrees this draft Domestic Abuse Policy to go out for public consultation for a period of 8 weeks.

## **1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the draft Domestic Abuse Policy and asks Committee to consider it and to agree to a proposed public consultation.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 Swale Borough Council, through both its safeguarding and community safety duties have been supporting domestic abuse victims for many years, linking in with both statutory and voluntary sector partners to improve partnership work and its response to victims. Since the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, a domestic abuse officer has been on post to review compliance to this Act and support wider partnership work to improve responses to victims and their families.
- 2.2 The Swale Community Safety Plan, developed by the Community Safety Partnership (CSP), identifies a number of priorities of which Domestic Abuse is one. The SBC Safeguarding Policy and associated procedures also includes detail of how SBC will respond to domestic abuse.
- 2.3 SBC is an active partner within the CSP and has participated heavily in local activity to increase service provision in the Borough for victims/survivors of domestic abuse. This also includes identifying gaps in services and working to address these, such as behavioural programmes for perpetrators in recent times. SBC also works closely with the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Partnership and financially contributes to the Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (support service).
- 2.4 Within Swale, for the period September 2021 – end August 2022 there were 5465 incidents of domestic abuse reported to Kent Police. This is a 3% increase on the same period the previous year. There has continued to be an increase in reported domestic abuse incidents over the last ten years within the Borough. This is in

part felt to be due to increased confidence in victims to report concerns, but also recognises the high prevalence of this issue.

- 2.5 SBC has agreed to apply for Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation. The accreditation standards are set to increase good working practices within organisations and will assist SBC in reviewing and making improvements where necessary in supporting domestic abuse victims and families.
- 2.5 Due to the volume of domestic abuse incidents within Swale; the standards within the DAHA accreditation and a need to ensure that our response to domestic abuse is coordinated in the best manner, a standalone Domestic Abuse Policy has been developed.
- 2.6 This policy covers:
- Legal Duties
  - Roles and Responsibilities
  - Staff Training
  - Partnerships
  - Publicity/awareness raising
  - Responding to domestic abuse
- 2.7 This policy will be underpinned by a separate domestic abuse procedure that will provide a daily framework for staff to ensure the correct response is given to victims/families. This will sit alongside existing safeguarding procedures. Additionally, a separate policy will be developed for staff affected by domestic abuse.
- 2.8 The Policy does introduce the idea of Domestic Abuse Champions within the organisation. These would be voluntary roles for staff interested in additional training on this agenda and would be the 'go to' for advice/guidance within their teams, in addition to the Safeguarding Officers.

### **3 Proposals**

- 3.1 That the Communities Committee agree for this draft Domestic Abuse Policy to go out for public consultation for a period of 8 weeks.

### **4 Alternative Options**

- 4.1 To not approve this draft policy for consultation - with the Community Safety Plan and Safeguarding Policy in place, there is no legal requirement for a separate Domestic Abuse Policy. However, having one in place is considered good practice and will consolidate all domestic abuse work by SBC.

### **5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed**

- 5.1 Consultation is proposed to take place with the following groups:

- Domestic Abuse Service Providers
- Other external partner agencies including Kent Police, Housing Associations
- Local residents
- Victims/Survivors of domestic abuse

## 6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	This Policy supports the Corporate Plan priority ‘tackling deprivation and creating equal opportunities for everyone’ and the objective of ‘ensuring that the council plays a proactive role in reducing crime and ASB, including through the modernisation of CCTV provision’.
Financial, Resource and Property	There are no additional finance, resource or property implications in implementing this refreshed policy. Funding is already committed to the county commissioned domestic abuse service from existing community safety core budget. Further grant funding is provided on an adhoc basis towards perpetrator services or other required local services through core community safety budget or the grant received from the Police and Crime Commissioner.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	<p>The Council is required to comply with a variety of legislation in relation to Domestic Abuse including the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Care Act 2014, Childrens Act 1989 and the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.</p> <p>This policy does not introduce any additional activity to meet the requirements of this legislation but consolidates existing action into one place.</p>
Crime and Disorder	The policy details the main aim of the Domestic Abuse Policy which is to increase the safety of those residents within the Borough that are affected by domestic abuse.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	No environment and sustainability implications have been identified at this stage.
Health and Wellbeing	This policy consolidates existing activity under both the community safety and safeguarding agendas into on place, all of which seek to increase the health and wellbeing of those affected by domestic abuse.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	The creation of this policy will bolster the existing Safeguarding Policy for the Council, ensuring appropriate responses are in place for those affected by domestic abuse.

Risk Management and Health and Safety	No specific implications on risk management or health/safety have been identified at this stage.
Equality and Diversity	No specific implications on groups with protected characteristics have been identified.
Privacy and Data Protection	The introduction of this policy does not identify any new privacy or data protection concerns. Any data gathered or shared will continue to be done so in line with existing community safety/safeguarding mechanisms.

## **7 Appendices**

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Draft Swale Domestic Abuse Policy 2022-25

## **8 Background Papers**

No background papers.