

<b>Policy and Resources Committee Meeting</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	Wednesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> March 2023
<b>Report Title</b>	Swale Domestic Abuse Policy
<b>EMT Lead</b>	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
<b>Head of Service</b>	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing and Communities
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Stephanie Curtis, Community Safety Manager
<b>Classification</b>	<b>Open</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	1. That the Policy and Resources Committee approves this Domestic Abuse Policy

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

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the Swale Domestic Abuse Policy and the outcome of the consultation that has taken place.

## **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 several 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 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 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.

### **3 Proposals**

- 3.1 That the Policy and Resources Committee approves this Domestic Abuse Policy

### **4 Alternative Options**

- 4.1 To not approve this draft policy - 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**

- 5.1 Consultation has taken place with the Communities Committee on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2022. This committee provided several suggested amendments to the report and agreed it should then go out for public consultation for 6 weeks.
- 5.2 Public Consultation ran from mid-December to the end of January 2023, with a series of 18 questions. 10 responses were received, which were a mixture from residents and agencies. A summary of feedback is shown in Appendix 2, along with amendments that have been made to the policy because of this.
- 5.3 Consultation also took place with our national lead for the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation from Standing Together. Their feedback is also shown in Appendix 2, along with which amendments have then been made to the draft Policy because of this.
- 5.4 Key changes made within the Policy include:
- Several sections have been slightly amended to ensure this policy is aimed at victims and survivors of domestic abuse.
  - Wording within the Policy has been expanded within some sections to stress the differing response needed to those with protected characteristics.
  - Change of term Domestic Abuse Champion to Domestic Abuse Advocate

- Responding to Domestic Abuse Section has been brought forward within the Policy so it is easier for Victims/Survivors to access.

## 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 1: Swale Domestic Abuse Policy 2022-25
- Appendix 2: Feedback from Public Consultation on draft Domestic Abuse Policy

## **8 Background Papers**

No background papers.