



DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

16th OCTOBER 2025

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Version Number	Purpose / Change	Author	Date
1.0	First issued	Chris Stratford	16/10/2025

Links to Council Corporate Plan 2025-28:

Council ambition	Linked?
Working for a prosperous future <i>The Council wants to ensure the best possible local economy, with opportunities for its residents to succeed and achieve</i>	Yes
Healthier, safer communities <i>Residents should feel safe in the Borough and supported to be more active in order to improve their health and wellbeing</i>	Yes
A greener and cleaner environment <i>It's important that everyone looks after the environment</i>	No
Restoring The Council to good health <i>The Council will be placed on a sound financial footing ensuring resilience – delivering the service its residents deserve and expect</i>	Yes
We ♥ Castle Point <i>The Council will help create and maintain the best possible place to live in, work in and visit</i>	Yes

Lead Officer responsible for owning the Policy and internal approval body (meeting / board where the Policy is approved for adoption or approved for referral to PFH or Committee for adoption)

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Approved by: IAN BUTT, DIRECTOR, PLACE AND COMMUNITIES

Lead Member and Committee responsible for approving Policy:

Name: CLLR RUSS SAVAGE, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR PEOPLE & COMMUNITY

Equality Impact Assessment undertaken?

Yes

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Approximately 1 in 4 women, 1 in 6-7 men, and 1 in 8 children will be affected by domestic abuse at some point in their life. Around 40% of the LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and others) community have experienced domestic abuse. On average, 2 women are killed each week in the UK as a direct result of domestic abuse.¹
- 1.2 Castle Point Borough Council ('the Council') recognises the harm domestic abuse can cause within homes and communities. Domestic abuse is often a hidden problem, but research shows it is unfortunately steadily on the rise.
- 1.3 Everyone has the right to live without fear of violence or abuse. The Council wants all residents of the Borough and all Council employees to be safe from the impact of domestic abuse and this Policy sets out the Council's commitment to help tackle this.
- 1.4 The Council is committed to ensuring that all affected residents and staff are supported in an empathetic, sensitive and non-judgmental way.

2. Scope

- 2.1 The Council recognises the cross-Government definition of domestic abuse as: "Any incident or patterns of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality." This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:
 - psychological/mental
 - physical
 - sexual
 - financial
 - emotional
 - controlling behaviour
 - coercive behaviour
- 2.2 This Policy applies to all residents that live in the Borough and all Council employees.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 '**The Domestic Abuse Act (The Act)**' received Royal Assent on 29 April 2021. The Act holds both legislative and non-legislative functions designed to:
 - Promote awareness of domestic abuse;
 - Protect and support victims and their families; and
 - Transform the justice process to prioritise victims' safety and to drive consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse across all local areas, agencies, and sectors
- 3.2 '**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.

¹ National Centre for Domestic Violence, based on UK national statistics in 2023

3.3 **'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

3.4 **'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

3.5 **'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.

3.6 **'Coercive control'** – The Council recognises 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.

Coercive behaviour is 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. This could cover issues such as FGM (Female Genital Mutilation), forced marriage, or 'honour-based' violence, although it is recognised that this is also physical abuse.

Coercive behaviour will be identified by trained people as a pattern of acts, including but not limited to 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.

3.7 **'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:

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

3.8 **'Stalking'** –this may include behaviours such as:

- Following
- Loitering
- Monitoring
- Excessive phone calls and messages
- Covertly tracking a mobile phone
- Unwanted attention and gifts

3.9 Leaving or separating from an abusive relationship offers no guarantee that the abuse will stop and many victim/survivors are subjected to ongoing stalking. Stalking

may also happen when there has been no previous relationship (although this is less common).

4. Aims and Objectives of the Policy

4.1 The purpose of this Policy is to outline the Council's approach to supporting its residents and Council employees who experience domestic abuse and its effects. This Policy delivers the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. This Policy is a cross-services initiative delivered across service areas including:

- Housing management
- Housing options
- Sheltered housing
- Repairs and maintenance
- Community Safety
- Human Resources

4.2 This Policy explains how the Council provides support tailored to the needs of the individual, working in partnership with statutory and specialist agencies to provide a survivor-led coordinated response to domestic abuse.

4.3 This Policy aims to ensure that the person who reports that they are experiencing domestic abuse is taken seriously and managed with empathy and that consideration is given to their needs. It aims to ensure that all colleagues act in a non-judgmental and empathetic manner which reflects the best interests of the person reporting domestic abuse.

4.4 As well as providing a service for residents, the Housing Management Team, Community Safety Team and Human Resources Team support all Council employees who may be experiencing domestic abuse.

5. Policy Statement

5.1 The Council will ensure that all residents and Council employees can report domestic abuse to the Council through a variety of methods, including face to face, through the website, email or over the phone. The Council will respond to all reports of domestic abuse as soon as it can, within two working days whenever possible. If someone feels there is an imminent danger they should always contact the police.

5.2 The Council is committed to acting on all reports of domestic abuse that it receives and will work closely with those affected in decision making. It will also respond to reports from Council employees, contractors, external agencies, or other individuals, but is mindful of a victim's consent to share information and will use information received with empathy and professionalism.

5.3 Statistically women and the LGBTQ+ community are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse. The Council will support all individuals experiencing domestic abuse irrespective of age, gender, sexuality, disability, race or ethnicity, sex, religion, social background, or any other protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010.

5.4 The Council is committed to working towards preventing and tackling domestic abuse to ensure that everybody can live free from fear, intimidation and violence based on the following principles:

- Those experiencing domestic abuse should never be made to feel responsible for the abuse.

- Those experiencing domestic abuse should not have to take any action they reasonably feel will place them in greater danger.
- Those experiencing domestic abuse are best able to assess the danger they are in.
- The individual's perception of the situation will be of paramount importance.

6. Reporting domestic abuse

- 6.1 The Council realises it is often extremely difficult for a person to come forward for help and it may take several attempts for them to leave an abusive situation. It accepts an individual may choose to return to a potentially abusive situation, but this will not affect the way in which their case is dealt with, or the support provided if they later return for help.
- 6.2 The Council will ensure that specialist training is given to its workforce. It will appoint a member of staff to lead on any cases where it receives a report of domestic abuse and this person, wherever possible, will act as the single point of contact.
- 6.3 The Council will engage with the MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) process and other specialist agencies; and recognises that partnership working is instrumental towards achieving a resolution. It will share information between agencies as needed, whilst ensuring all data protection protocols are kept.
- 6.4 The Council will attend Child in Need/Child Protection meetings where appropriate, sharing information between agencies as needed to safeguard the children experiencing domestic abuse.
- 6.5 The Council will carry out a risk assessment using a UK wide accredited form - the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment (DASH) Risk Checklist - to plan actions to support victims/survivors, including any children.
- 6.6 The Council will offer to meet victims/survivors in an agreed safe location; it will agree methods of contact and will give an opportunity to choose a colleague of a specific gender, where possible.
- 6.7 The Council will base its support on the needs of individuals, recognising that not all people see themselves as victims and the officer dealing with the case will be empathetic and supportive.
- 6.8 The Council will work across departments and partner agencies, and with registered providers of housing, to resolve any issues with joint tenancies to ensure victims/survivors are safely and adequately housed.
- 6.9 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. The Council will adopt a collaborative approach with partner agencies when supporting people who are being abused, ensuring that information is shared in a manner which places the safety and protection of the person first.
- 6.10 The Council will ensure that the victim/survivor has access to the range of support services available to them. (Please see Appendix 1 for a list of support services available).
- 6.11 The Council will hold regular meetings with partner agencies to ensure that all supporting agencies and services are fully aware and will keep victims/survivors informed.
- 6.12 With the knowledge and, ideally, the consent of the victim/survivor, the Council will

provide further information, signpost or refer for those needing more support.

6.13 Whilst confidentiality should be kept, the Council will ensure internal safeguarding procedures are followed if it becomes concerned that there may be a threat to life, risk of significant/imminent harm or harm to a child or vulnerable adult.

6.14 The Council will be an active member of the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board (SETDAB) and Southend and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Partnership.

7. Practical help for supporting survivors and victims of domestic abuse

7.1 The Council will use the full range of remedies, as appropriate, considering each case individually.

7.2 The Council will advise about possible courses of action, both to respond to the immediate situation and in relation to longer-term solutions.

7.3 The Council will take firm action against the perpetrator, where appropriate. This could also include supporting the perpetrator with referrals to partner agencies and/or intervention and education programmes to try and prevent any recurrence of abuse.

7.4 The Council will support and empower individuals to report events to the police, but it will not force anyone to do anything they are uncomfortable with. The Council will, however, always have due regard to its wider statutory and safeguarding responsibilities.

7.5 The Council recognises that cases of domestic abuse can be very sensitive and managing them must be done with care. Council staff will ensure they only involve other agencies and share information about the person concerned when needed, except for:

- raising safeguarding concerns about adults with care and support needs or child protection concerns
- where the Council is required by law, for example, if being questioned by the police as part of a criminal investigation, or as part of a serious case review.

7.6 The Council will meet its statutory and safeguarding requirements in line with existing policies and procedures where there are safeguarding concerns about a vulnerable person. In all cases of domestic abuse, colleagues should refer to the Safeguarding Policy 2025.

7.7 Any children within a property where domestic abuse is taking place would be considered as victims of a type of child abuse and safeguarding procedures should be followed. This also applies for any elderly household members, for example, where financial abuse is occurring.

7.8 The Council will provide relevant advice and help, including information about alternative housing, suitable support from specialist organisations (such as Changing Pathways, Next Chapter or Finding Legal Options for Women Survivors (Flows) flows.org.uk, Women's Aid).

7.9 The Council will provide reasonable increased security measures within/around the home where needed, for example, additional door locks or sanctuary rooms. It sometimes refers to this as 'target hardening'. This may involve working in conjunction with partner agencies, such as the police.

7.10 The Council recognises that housing is one of the main reasons why survivors do not leave abusive homes. If there is an immediate safety risk, it will work in partnership

with the relevant partner agencies and other Local Authorities to consider the housing options.

- 7.11 The Council will ensure sensitivity around lettings when domestic abuse is disclosed. If there is a need to move home, it will work with victims/survivors to identify areas that will minimise the risk of future abuse. The Council will also continue to act against the perpetrator where relevant and appropriate to do so.
- 7.12 Whilst the Council is dealing with the case and after it has been resolved it will provide support for victims/survivors, their families and witnesses to make sure they feel safe in their homes and community.

8. Legislation, regulation and guidance

- 8.1 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 relies upon and refers to the following legislation to ensure that the Council is effective in the way it deals with reports of domestic abuse:
 - Housing Act 1988
 - Housing Act 1996
 - Part IV of the Family Law Act 1996
 - Housing Act 1996
 - Protection from Harassment Act 1997
 - Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003
 - Domestic Abuse Crime and Victims Act 2004
 - Crime and Security Act 2010 (Sections 24-33)
 - Equality Act 2010
 - Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
 - Care Act 2014
 - Serious Crime Act 2015 (Section 76)
 - Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
 - Clare's Law 2017 also known as [Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)]
 - Data Protection Act 2018
 - Domestic Abuse Act 2021
 - The Neighbourhood and Community Standard 2024
 - Tenancy Agreement

9. Data and Record keeping

- 9.1 All reports of domestic abuse will be documented, stored and retained so they can be relied upon to give witness statements in any potential legal proceedings.
- 9.2 All reports will be stored confidentially to protect all individuals concerned.

10. Equality Diversity and Inclusion

- 10.1 The Council is committed to fairness and equality for all regardless of their colour, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, age, religion or belief, family circumstances or offending history. The aim is to ensure that Council policies and procedures do not create an unfair disadvantage for anyone, either directly or indirectly.

10.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken in respect of this Policy which identified no negative impacts on any person or group with a protected characteristic because of this Policy.

11. Monitoring and review

11.1 This Policy will be reviewed every 3 years, unless new legislation or good practice means it needs to be reviewed sooner.

11.2 This Policy supports compliance to an external requirement of the Neighbourhood and Community Standard for the Housing Service only.

11.3 The Council will keep statistics of the number of people that present themselves to the Housing Service and Community Safety Partnership who are experiencing domestic abuse.

12. Associated policies and procedures

Domestic Abuse Procedure

Council Housing Tenancy Management Policy

Council Housing Tenancy Management

Procedure Allocations Policy

Lettings Policy

Council Housing Income Recovery Policy & Procedure

Council Housing Management Moves Policy & Procedure

Sanctuary Referral Procedure

13. Consultation

13.1 The Council is committed to meaningful engagement and has consulted with its stakeholders, the police, Social Services adults and children, and consulted with women living in a domestic abuse hostel in the formation of this Policy.

14. Training and communication

14.1 The Council will deliver training on this Policy and the procedures that support it, to make sure all line managers and customer facing colleagues, including contractors, know how to respond appropriately to reports of domestic abuse.

14.2 The Housing Management Team, Community Safety Team and the Housing Advice Team will receive more detailed training appropriate to the needs of their role.

17.3 This Policy will be published on the Castle Point website and stored on the intranet for internal use.

15. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Sanctuary -single point of contact list (**NOT public document**)

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment Domestic Abuse Policy