DRAFT Responding to Domestic Abuse Policy 2026

Basildon Borough Council

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Basildon Borough Council

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1. Introduction

The Council is committed to protecting those experiencing domestic abuse, including their children, to live in the Borough without fear of harm, intimidation or abuse and to support those who seek to change their abusive behaviour. This commitment is embedded within this policy, which sets out more explicitly Basildon Council's approach to supporting those affected by domestic abuse.

Any resident in the borough, regardless of protected characteristic, and including their children, could be impacted by this policy at a time when connected persons (see definition below) relationships are strained or break down for whatever reason, and abuse becomes a factor. The council recognises that even after the relationship ends, the abuse doesn't necessarily end, and in these cases the council also commits to supporting victims and their children.

3. Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate our commitment to ensure that our residents are aware of the signs of domestic abuse and where to go to for help. The council will work across services and with our partners to ensure that victims are supported, and also, where a perpetrator of domestic abuse recognises their behaviour and seeks help to change that support is offered through the relevant systems.

Domestic abuse changes lives – those of the victims, perpetrators and their children, often in tragic ways. This policy aims to ensure that a culture of zero tolerance to domestic abuse exists and is embedded within all council services and that (relevant) employees, members, those delivering contracts on behalf of the council and volunteers understand their role and responsibilities in supporting all residents to live a life free from fear, intimidation and abuse from this heinous act.

Alongside our safeguarding responsibilities, we will continue to provide an environment where all staff are trained to an appropriate level and encouraged to think of the welfare of those experiencing domestic abuse, along with the impact upon their children, as being their responsibility, understanding the need for them to play a full and active part in the delivery of the council's response.

We will also continue to embed an organisational culture whereby staff encourage victims to report domestic abuse and support them to do so. For those who perpetrate domestic abuse, and who want to change their behaviour, the council will ensure that in house support is available which will work alongside referrals to relevant agencies support programmes.

The council believes that all individuals, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex or sexual orientation, should have the greatest possible control over their lives, and not have control forced upon them.

They should be able to make informed decisions, or be supported to make these decisions if unable to do so themselves, without fear of harm, intimidation, or abuse from others. This policy adheres to all relevant domestic abuse and safeguarding legislation, data protection legislation and government guidance to date.

4. Legislation and Regulation

This Policy has been developed in line with current legislation, statutory guidance and regulatory requirements relating to domestic abuse, safeguarding, housing management and support for victims and survivors.

The principal legislation underpinning this Policy is the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which provides a statutory definition of domestic abuse and places duties on local authorities to assess and provide support for victims and their children within safe accommodation.

The Act recognises that domestic abuse can take many forms, including physical or sexual abuse, violent or threatening behaviour, controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse, psychological, emotional or other forms of abuse.

The Council will also have regard to the following legislation and guidance, where relevant:

- **Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017**, which place duties on local authorities to prevent and relieve homelessness, including where domestic abuse places an individual at risk of losing their home.
- **Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004**, which require local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who may be affected by domestic abuse.
- **Care Act 2014**, which establishes duties to protect adults with care and support needs who may be experiencing abuse or neglect.
- **Crime and Disorder Act 1998**, which supports partnership working to reduce crime and disorder and improve community safety.
- **Equality Act 2010**, which requires public bodies to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not.
- **Human Rights Act 1998**, which protects fundamental rights and freedoms and supports a victim-centred approach to service delivery.
- **Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation** (UK GDPR), which govern the collection, sharing and processing of personal information.
- **Serious Crime Act 2015**, which introduced the offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in intimate or family relationships.
- **Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014,** which provides powers to address behaviour affecting victims and communities.

The Council will work in partnership with statutory agencies, housing providers, support organisations and other stakeholders to meet its legal responsibilities and ensure that victims and survivors of domestic abuse receive appropriate protection, support and access to services. All actions taken under this Policy will be guided by a victim-centred, trauma-informed approach and will seek to safeguard individuals whilst complying with relevant legal and regulatory requirements.

5. Definitions

Domestic Abuse

Under the Act domestic abuse is defined as:
Behaviour of a person ("A") towards another person ("B") is "domestic abuse" if –

A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and the behaviour is abusive.

Behaviour is "abusive" if it consists of any of the following:
(a) physical or sexual abuse;
(b) violent or threatening behaviour;

(c) controlling or coercive behaviour;
(d) economic abuse;
(e) psychological, emotional or other abuse; and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

"Personally connected" means:
(a) they are, or have been, married to each other;
(b) they are, or have been, civil partners of each other;
(c) they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
(d) they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
(e) they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other;
(f) they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child;
(g) they are relatives.

Under the Act a child (under 18) is a victim of domestic abuse where they are related to either person A or B and where they see, hear or experience the effects of the abuse.

(Specific) Offences involving Abusive or Violent Behaviour

Controlling or Coercive Behaviour

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

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

Disclosure of private sexual photographs or films Disclosure, or threats to disclose private sexual photographs or films in which an individual appears, with intent to cause distress is an offence under the 2021 Act where the individual did not give consent for disclosure.

Offences Against the Person

Strangulation or suffocation – Intentionally strangling or acting in a way to suffocate or restrict a person's breathing where the intention was, or the recklessness resulted in, a person suffering serious harm. Serious harm relates to grievous bodily harm, actual bodily harm or wounding, within the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act. 9

Consent to serious harm for sexual gratification is not a defence under the 2021 Act, where serious harm relates to grievous bodily harm, actual bodily harm or wounding, within the Offences Against the Person Act 1861

Other Types of Abusive Behaviour

Physical or Sexual Abuse

Physical abuse is a non-accidental infliction of physical force that results, or could result, in bodily injury, pain or impairment.

Sexual abuse is the involvement in sexual activity without consent. A victim could be unable to consent or be pressured or induced to consent or take part.

Economic Abuse

This relates to behaviour which has a substantial adverse effect on person B's ability to acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or to obtain goods or services. Economic abuse can also be towards person B even if the behaviour is directed towards another person. (e.g. a child)

More than the control of a partner's access to money and finances (financial abuse), perpetrators may also interfere with things that money can buy, including food, clothing, transportation and a place to live (economic abuse). It can also include restricting access to essential resources such as denying the means to improve a person's economic status (for example, through employment, education or training), controlling access to money or resources such as stopping a victim working, taking their wages or putting them into debt.

Economic abuse is designed to limit someone's freedom. This type of abuse can create economic instability and/or make one partner dependent on the other, thus preventing victims from leaving and rebuilding their lives.

Honour Based Abuse, Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation

Honour Based Abuse (HBA) is violence and abuse in the name of honour, covering a variety of behaviours (including crimes), mainly but not exclusively against females, where the person is being punished by their family and/or community for a perceived transgression against the 'honour' of the family or community, or is required to undergo certain activities or procedures in 'honour' of the family. This can also include harmful cultural practices such as breast ironing.

Honour Based Abuse is not a crime itself, however the practices used to punish individuals are criminal acts, i.e. abduction, assault and murder and includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional and/or psychological abuse, financial abuse, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

A Forced Marriage (FM) "is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of both parties, where duress is a factor" ('A Choice of Right' by HM Government 2000). Duress can involve physical, psychological, sexual, financial and/or emotional pressure.

Under the ASB Crime & Policing Act 2014 it is illegal to:

a. use violence, threats or any other form of coercion for the purposes of causing another person to enter into a marriage; and
b. believe, or ought reasonably to believe, that the conduct may cause the other person to enter into the marriage without free and full consent.

Duress can involve physical, psychological, sexual, financial and/or emotional pressure.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a collective term for illegal procedures which include the removal of part/all external female genitalia for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons. The practice is not required by any religion. It is painful, medically unnecessary and has serious health consequences at the time it is carried out and in later life. The procedure is typically performed on girls of any age but is also performed on new-born girls and on young women before marriage/pregnancy.

A number of girls die as a direct result of the procedure, from blood loss or infection. FGM may be practised illegally by doctors or traditional health workers in the UK, or girls may be taken abroad for the operation.

Where HBA and/or FGM takes place between personally connected individuals both HBA, FM and FGM can also be classed as a form of Domestic Abuse.

Stalking

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust (or the National Stalking Helpline) describes stalking as a pattern of unwanted and persistent behaviour that is motivated by a fixation or obsession that causes a victim to suffer alarm, distress or a fear of violence. It can be perpetrated by men or women. Stalking is also becoming more common through the use of technology and is often referred to as cyberstalking. This can include sending emails and posting messages on social media sites.

It is illegal for a person to pursue a course of conduct that they know or ought to know amounts to stalking. A course of conduct refers to two or more incidents of unwanted behaviour.

Under the Stalking Protection Act 2019 victims, along with any connected persons, can be protected from the risks associated with stalking.

Safe Accommodation

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 provides for victims being supported in safe accommodation. Under the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government draft statutory guidance for local authorities (June 2021), safe accommodation relates to:

• Refuge accommodation – a refuge offers accommodation and intensive support which is tied to that accommodation. Victims, including their children, have to be refuge residents to access expert emotional and practical support.

• Specialist safe accommodation – refuges for BAME, LGBTQ+, and disabled victims and their children, which may provide single gender accommodation with dedicated specialist support to victims who share a protected characteristic(s) – including services that are led by those that also share the protected characteristic (also known as ‘by and for’) - and/or have complex needs.

• Dispersed accommodation:

i. Safe (secure and dedicated to supporting victims of domestic abuse), self contained accommodation with the same level of specialist domestic abuse support as provided within a refuge but which may be more suitable for victims who are unable to stay in a refuge with communal spaces due to complex support needs or for families with teenage sons for example.

ii. Safe (secure and dedicated to supporting victims of domestic abuse), self contained 'semi-independent' accommodation which is not within a refuge but with support for victims who may not require the intensive support offered through refuge, but are still at risk of abuse from their perpetrator/s.

• Sanctuary Schemes – properties with local authority installed Sanctuary Schemes or other similar schemes which provide enhanced physical security measures within a home. A Sanctuary Scheme is a survivor centred initiative which aims to make it possible for victims of domestic abuse to remain in their own homes, where it is safe for them to do so, where it is their choice, and where the perpetrator does not live in the accommodation. This is done by providing additional security to the victims' property or perimeter.

• Move-on and/or second stage accommodation - interchangeable terms for projects temporarily accommodating victims, including families who no longer need the intensive level of support provided in a refuge, but would still benefit from a lower level of domestic abuse specific support for a period before they move to fully independent and secure accommodation. There is no expectation that every victim will require this. Many victims are ready to move straight to a secure new home from refuge. However, move-on and / or second stage accommodation may be helpful in some cases.

Other forms of domestic abuse emergency accommodation – i.e. a safe place with appropriate support. To give victims an opportunity to spend a temporary period of time to [consider and] make decisions in an environment which is self contained and safe.
This would include access to wrap around support and specialist support for victims with complex needs (including mental health needs and substance misuse). An example of 'other' forms of safe accommodation would be the 'Whole Housing Approach'.

According to the emerging Essex County Council Domestic Abuse Commissioning Strategy 2021 - 2024, there are 5 refuges within the county of Essex. County-wide dispersed accommodation consists of houses, 2-bedroom flats, single bed units and privately owned flats.

Information sharing and confidentiality
Information Sharing and Confidentiality In order to keep people safe from harm, professionals will share relevant information across geographical and professional boundaries as required by law, in particular Section 115 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, and in accordance with the council's Information Management Policy; Section 1.1.1 Personal data as defined in the retained EU law version of the General Data Protection Regulation ((EU) 2016/679) ("UK GDPR") and the Data Protection Act 2018 ("DPA 2018"); and relevant partner Information Sharing Protocols.

When there is a reasonable cause to believe that a child, young person or adult with care and support needs may be suffering, or may be at risk of suffering harm, consideration will always be given to referring these concerns to the relevant authorities under the council's safeguarding responsibilities

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Domestic Abuse Commissioner

The Commissioner represents the view of victims and survivors, raises public awareness, monitors the response of local authorities, the justice system and other statutory agencies and holds them to account in tackling domestic abuse. The Domestic Abuse Act provides the Commissioner with the

statutory powers to publish reports and lay them before Parliament. These reports will hold local commissioners, statutory agencies and national Government to account and make recommendations on how they can improve their response.

Essex County Council

As a Tier One local authority, Essex County Council (Essex CC) has a statutory duty under the Act to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children residing in refuges and other safe accommodation. Essex CC also has a responsibility to assess the need for accommodation-based support for all victims and their children, including those from outside Essex, and to develop and publish a strategy for this provision, based on the assessment of need.

Essex CC also has a duty to co-operate with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner and to create a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board (DALPB). The DALPB will focus on the new duties and commissioning under Part 4 of the Act.

Essex CC is also part of the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board (SETDAB), see below with responsibility for the overarching Domestic Abuse Strategy for the county of Essex.

Basildon Borough Council

As a Tier 2 local authority, the council's response to domestic abuse is in recognising, advising and supporting victims and their families and in signposting them to additional services depending on their needs, i.e. services provided by our partner organisations. The council also has a duty to provide advice and support to anybody who is homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness. As Essex CC has responsibilities as the Children's Services Authority and the Social Services Authority for Essex, the council will report all domestic abuse concerns, incidents and allegations regarding the welfare of a child or adult with care and support needs (under the Care Act 2014 definition) to them, through the appropriate referral mechanisms.

Under the Domestic Abuse Act, the council will work with the Tier 1 authority, Essex County Council, in its statutory roles, above. Basildon Council also recognises its duty to co-operate with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner upon request, for the purposes of the Commissioner's functions, under the Act. The council will provide a new secure tenancy to victims of domestic abuse, in accordance with Section 79 of the Act.

Basildon Domestic Abuse Team (BDAT)

BDAT is the Council's Domestic Abuse Service and includes qualified IDVAs (Independent Domestic Violence Advocates)BDAT provides advice and support to victims residing in the Basildon area who are experiencing domestic abuse, including help to find safe accommodation. BDAT is the main entry point for Basildon borough residents seeking support.

Changing Pathways

Changing Pathways is a local domestic abuse charity who provide counselling and advocacy services to victims of domestic abuse and stalking, amongst other services. It also sources and supports victims into refuge accommodation, where necessary and works closely with BDAT. The charity also runs a Children and Young People IDVA service for Basildon residents aged from 13 to 19 experiencing domestic abuse, with an option to extend to age 21 in special circumstances. Southend, Essex and Thurrock

Domestic Abuse Board (SETDAB)

SETDAB is made up of representatives from agencies and organisations working to join up and better facilitate the local authority areas of Southend, Essex and Thurrock's vision to enable everyone to live a life free from all forms of domestic abuse. The Board 18 is responsible for designing and implementing the Domestic Abuse Strategy across the county of Essex. SETDAB provides strategic leadership to address domestic abuse by providing a multi-agency framework, common ethos and co-ordinated approach to innovate, drive change and address domestic abuse.

SETDAB co-ordinate Domestic Abuse Related Death Review (DARDR)on behalf of the local Community Safety Partnership (Safer Basildon Partnership) and are published on the SETDAB website.

Under the Act, SETDAB has a duty to send a copy of DARDR reports to the Domestic Abuse Commissioner. According to Home Office guidance14, a DARDR, formerly known as a Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) is a review of the circumstances in which the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from domestic abuse with a view to identifying the lessons learnt from the death.

Essex Police

Essex Police is the lead agency for investigating and prosecuting reported cases of domestic abuse and other criminal behaviour, i.e. stalking. It is also a key partner of SETDAB and the Safer Basildon Partnership.

Domestic Abuse Investigation Teams (DAIT) were created by Essex Police to provide a dedicated response to the investigation of domestic abuse crimes. DAIT investigate offences that occur out of domestic situations and support victims through the initial investigation process of incidents graded as medium or high risk. DAIT target perpetrators and support victims as their cases proceed through the criminal justice system.

Domestic Abuse Problem Solving Teams (DAPST) work to understand the issues that trigger incidents, address victims' concerns and enforce protection orders against perpetrators. DAPST aim to break the cycle of domestic abuse by focusing on; reducing the number of victims who are unsupportive of police prosecution, reducing the number of offences encountered by repeat and serial victims of abuse, and reducing the frequency of offending by repeat and serial domestic abuse perpetrators.

DAPST take a victim-focused approach to protect those victims graded as medium and high risk, building trust and confidence. The team also take a problem-solving approach to identify and overcome individual and structural barriers preventing victims from breaking the cycle of abuse. Wherever possible victims will be empowered to improve their own situation and take their own decisions. Enforcement activity with perpetrators will be carefully balanced with the needs and wishes of the victims. 14 Home Office, (2016). Multi-Agency Statutory Guidance for the Conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews. London: Home Office.

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, or Clare's Law enables the police to disclose information to a victim, or potential victim, of domestic abuse about their partner, or ex-partner's previous abusive or violent offending. Guidance on Clare's Law has been made statutory under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Under the Domestic Abuse Act the police have the powers to issue Domestic Abuse Protection Notices, providing victims with immediate protection.

Under Operation Encompass, Essex Police provide information to school safeguarding leads where a pupil has been exposed to domestic abuse. This enables schools to make reasonable adjustments and appropriate support measures for pupils who have been affected; thus helping to reduce the adverse impact of domestic abuse on children and their childhood experiences.

Criminal/Family Courts

Under the Act, the courts can hand out Domestic Abuse Protection Orders to help prevent offending by forcing perpetrators to take steps to change their behaviour, including seeking mental health support and drug and alcohol rehabilitation. Victims will also be able to provide evidence via video, using protection screens, or other measures in Criminal Courts, thus avoiding any intimidation and further trauma. Under the Act, perpetrators will no longer be able to cross-examine victims in Family and Civil Courts.

Safer Basildon Partnership

The Safer Basildon Partnership is the Borough's local Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and is a statutory body required by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to formulate a strategy to reduce crime and disorder, combat substance misuse and reduce re offending and be responsible for the delivery of this.

The Safer Basildon Partnership Board is the responsible authority group, consisting of senior managers from the following agencies:

- Basildon Borough Council
- Essex Police
- NHS Basildon and Billericay Clinical Commissioning Group
- Essex County Council
- Essex County Fire and Rescue Service
- The Probation Service

The partnership prioritises domestic abuse and focuses its efforts and resources to implement plans to protect vulnerable people and play a key role in safeguarding people from abuse, harm and exploitation.

Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews CSPs are responsible for conducting Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews in accordance with the statutory requirement set out in Section 9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004. The review must, according to the Act, be a review 'of the circumstances in which the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from domestic abuse with a view to identifying the lessons to be learnt from the death'.

The purpose of a DARDR is to:

- Establish what lessons are to be learned from the domestic abuse related death regarding the way in which local professionals and organisations work individually and together to safeguard victims
- Identify clearly what those lessons are both within and between agencies, how and within what timescales they will be acted on, and what is expected to change as a result
- Apply these lessons to service responses including changes to policies and procedures as appropriate
- Prevent domestic abuse and homicide and improve service responses to all domestic abuse victims and their children by developing a co ordinated multi-agency approach to ensure that domestic abuse is identified and responded to effectively at the earliest possible opportunity

• Contribute to a better understanding of the nature of domestic abuse
• Highlight good practice.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) MARAC is a regular meeting to discuss how to help high risk victims of murder or serious harm identified through completion of a Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment, 'Honour'-based violence (DASH) model.

Various agencies are involved in MARACs, including an independent domestic abuse advocate (IDVA), police, children's social care, health and other relevant representatives. They share information about the victim, their children and perpetrators to formulate an action plan to reduce the risk for the victim.

The council will continue to follow the DASH model, and where relevant officers identify high risk victims, make MARAC referrals. Council housing representatives also attend MARAC upon request. Where concerns for the welfare of children and/or adults with care and support needs are also identified, officers will continue to follow safeguarding duties and also make referrals to the appropriate agencies. According to the SETDAB

Annual Report –2025-26, MARAC Partners have worked together to safeguard 2298 high risk victims of abuse, 114 more than the previous year.

Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements

Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) is the set of arrangements through which the Police, Probation and Prison Services work together with other agencies to manage the risks posed by violent and sexual offenders living in the community, in order to protect the public. MAPPA is not a statutory body in itself but is a mechanism through which agencies can better discharge their statutory responsibilities and protect the public in a co-ordinated manner.

The Probation Service

The Probation Service is a statutory criminal justice service that supervises high-risk offenders released into the community.

The Probation Service works with the Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, who carry out sentences given by the courts, in custody and the community, and rehabilitate people in their care through education and employment, ensuring interventions that reduce reoffending, and working with victims of serious crime, to help them on their journey to recovery.

Under Section 7 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the Probation Service has a role in the management of offenders of domestic abuse and in polygraphing offenders released on license.

Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs)

CCGs, overseen by NHS England, commission most of the hospital and community NHS services in the local areas for which they are responsible; this is the Basildon and Brentwood CCG, for the local area.

Commissioning involves deciding what services are needed for diverse local populations and ensuring that they are provided.

All GP practices belong to a CCG, which also includes other health staff, i.e. nurses.

Services CCGs commission include:

• Most planned hospital care

• Rehabilitative care
• Urgent and emergency care (including out-of-hours)
• Most community health services
• Mental health and learning disability services

Health and Wellbeing Partnership

The Health and Wellbeing Partnership is a forum where key leaders from the health and care system work together to improve the health and wellbeing of their local population and reduce health inequalities.

As a member of the Basildon Health Partnership, the Council plays an active and leading role in identifying ways it can contribute to and influence the achievement of better health and wellbeing outcomes for all residents.

The three key issues for the Borough are:

• Reducing the prevalence of adult and child obesity
• Improving mental health and wellbeing
• Reducing health inequalities by tackling poverty

7. Evidence and Rationale

In the period prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, national policy designed to tackle domestic abuse had undergone significant development. Moreover, as the pandemic hit, several new legislative and policy developments were either in process or planned. This culminated in the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which received Royal Assent on 29 April 2021.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (the Act) provides further protections to those affected by domestic abuse, including children, and strengthen measures to tackle perpetrators. 1 in 5 adults are affected by domestic abuse across our communities. This equates to 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6-7 men. In the year ending March 2026, the social and economic cost of domestic abuse in England and Wales was estimated at around £89.3 billion.

There is no arguing that domestic abuse is a gendered crime. 93% of high risk cases of domestic abuse heard at MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment) are where the victim is a woman, and 95% of those accessing IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocates) services are also women. In the year ending March 2025, data supplied from 32 police forces showed that victim was female in 72.1% of domestic abuse related crimes, compared with 27.9% where the victim was male.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognised Children as victims of domestic abuse for the first time – “children who see, hear, or experience the effects of domestic abuse are recognised as victims in their own right”1 78% of children living in domestic abuse household are directly harmed by the perpetrator of the abuse, in addition to the harm caused by witnessing the abuse of others In a recent report, Age UK6 highlighted the lack of data on victims of domestic abuse from age 75+ and called on the Office of National Statistics (ONS) to collate this data with the advent of the Domestic Abuse Bill.

From the statistics that were available for older people under 75, the report quoted the Crime Survey for England and Wales from 2018 – 2019. Around 180,000 older women aged 60-74 and 98,000 older men aged 60-74 were victims of domestic abuse during the previous year. The national domestic abuse charity, Women’s Aid, reports on its website7 that there is no evidence to suggest that women

from some ethnic or cultural communities are any more at risk from experiencing domestic abuse than others. However the form of abuse it takes may vary, for example, it may include forced marriage or female genital mutilation.

The latest Office of National Statistics (ONS) data release on victims of domestic abuse for the year ended March 2020 states that the highest prevalence of victims comes from those whose marital status is classed as separated, 16.4%, closely followed by those who have divorced/legally dissolved partnership, 11.4%. The measures contained within the Act arrived at a significant time in tackling this increase in domestic abuse, and to support people affected by domestic abuse in the future.

The council believes that everyone, regardless of age, sex, race, religion/belief, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, and marriage/civil partnerships, should be allowed to live free from domestic abuse. The continuation of a stand-alone domestic abuse policy will strengthen this belief and enhance the services the council and its partners deliver to those affected by domestic abuse in the borough.

The council has always supported those affected by domestic abuse and delivers services in partnership with the Basildon Domestic Abuse Team (BDAT), Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board (SETDAB) and Changing Pathways, a local domestic abuse charity.

During the year 2025/26, BDAT received 494 approaches into the service. 414 of these approaches didn't want refuge accommodation. The majority of these approaches requested support and assistance with making themselves safe either within their own accommodation or to seek alternative accommodation that was not a typical refuge set up. Essex Police recorded 47578 reported cases of high risk domestic abuse. The SETDAB Annual Report 2025-26 states that it's greatest success' of the last year includes the joint commissioning of domestic abuse services (with Southend and Thurrock), delivering training and conferences and communication and campaigns (including the Reflect perpetrator campaign)

8. Equality, Accessibility and Inclusion

The Council is committed to ensuring that all individuals affected by domestic abuse are treated with dignity, respect and fairness, and are able to access support and services without discrimination. Domestic abuse can affect anyone, regardless of age, disability, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity status, marriage or civil partnership status, or socio-economic background.

The Council recognises that some individuals and communities may face additional barriers when seeking help, reporting abuse or accessing support services. These barriers may arise from language needs, cultural factors, disability, poor mental or physical health, digital exclusion, financial dependency, immigration status, caring responsibilities, geographical isolation, or concerns about stigma and discrimination.

9. Monitoring, Compliance and Assurance

This Policy will be reviewed every 3 years or as legislation changes that would require us to review.

10. Corporate Alignment

Please use the table below to demonstrate how this Policy contributes to the delivery of the Corporate Plan. You may wish to expand on each point, as required.

People - We want Basildon to be home to healthy and active local communities able to support themselves and each other. Place. We want Basildon to offer a high quality of life for all residents through attractive, liveable, accessible and safe neighbourhoods and towns along with the provision of enduring facilities, green spaces and town centres that meet the needs of the community.

Promise -We want Basildon to have a thriving, dynamic and diverse economy where all our communities benefit from increased opportunity and our workforce has the right skills for our local economy and beyond.

The council will work with its partners to proactively tackle domestic abuse, by disseminating public information and offering support and advice to local people who are at risk of, or currently experiencing abuse, and to those whose relationships have broken down and who continue to experience abusive behaviour, i.e. stalking.

Following the changes to the Priority Need thresholds, the council has experienced an increase in approaches from single people, which pose significant challenges and pressures upon the Homelessness service.

As such, the council will work closely with Essex County Council, and safe accommodation providers in the borough to support all residents into a place to call home. We will work through partnership structures to better co-ordinate joint action and secure good quality outcomes locally and in doing so demand good public services to ensure our communities feel safe. The council will work with families, making referrals to other specialist agencies best placed to respond to their needs and concerns where appropriate

Corporate Ambitions	Levels of Impact			
	High	Medium	Low	None
People Basildon Borough will be a place where happier, healthier, and safer communities flourish, creating a sense of belonging and well-being for all.	X			
Places Basildon Borough will offer a high quality of life for all of its residents with high-quality homes, vibrant neighbourhoods, and towns centred around enduring facilities, green spaces, and thriving town centres. Each of our six unique areas will reflect this commitment to excellence.		X		
Promise Basildon Borough will be full of promise, where residents benefit from better education, enhanced skills, greater opportunities, and a thriving local economy that supports everyone's ambitions. increased opportunity and our workforce has the right skills for our local economy and beyond.	X			
Public Service Basildon Borough Council will provide ambitious public services, ensuring residents feel proud of the work the Council do and confident in our commitment to their future.	X			

12. Links to other Corporate Policies or Partner documents

List key corporate documents that are linked to this Policy, for example:

- Corporate Plan - Corporate Plan 2025-29 - Basildon Borough Council
- Homeless Strategy - To be added once released
- Safeguarding Policy - Safeguarding Policy - Basildon Borough Council
- Relevant legislation - Domestic Abuse Act 2021 - GOV.UK, Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities - Overview of the homelessness legislation - Guidance - GOV.UK, The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations, Care and support statutory guidance - GOV.UK, Community Safety Partnerships - GOV.UK, Equality Act 2010: guidance - GOV.UK, Microsoft Word - Document31, Data protection: The UK's data protection legislation - GOV.UK, Serious Crime Act 2015 - GOV.UK, Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act - GOV.UK