Draft Responding to Tenant Domestic Abuse Policy

Basildon Borough Council

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1. Introduction and Purpose

The Council is committed to preventing domestic abuse and supporting anyone affected by it. This Policy sets out the Council's approach to identifying, responding to and addressing domestic abuse, ensuring that victims and survivors receive a safe, consistent and supportive response.

The Council recognises that domestic abuse can have a significant impact on individuals, families and communities and is committed to a survivor-centred, trauma-informed approach which prioritises safety, wellbeing and recovery.

This Policy supports the Council's commitment to safeguarding adults and children, preventing homelessness, promoting equality and ensuring residents can access services free from abuse, fear and harassment.

2. Scope

Basildon Borough Council (BBC) is committed to preventing domestic abuse, raising awareness of its impact, and providing effective support to tenants who are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse. As a White Ribbon accredited organisation and a council working towards Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation, we are committed to embedding best practice across our services.

We recognise that domestic abuse is a serious crime and can have a significant impact on individuals, families, and communities. No person should have to live in fear of abuse, violence, coercion, or controlling behaviour. We are committed to providing a safe, supportive, and victim-centred response to all reports of domestic abuse.

Working in partnership with Essex County Council, specialist domestic abuse services, and other relevant agencies, we will fulfil our responsibilities under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and ensure tenants have access to appropriate advice, support, and accommodation options. This includes working collaboratively with commissioned domestic abuse services and refuge providers across Essex.

Basildon Domestic Abuse Team (BDAT) is the Council’s specialist domestic abuse service. The team includes qualified Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) who provide expert advice, advocacy, and support to tenants affected by domestic abuse.

Our approach is trauma-informed and recognises the barriers that many victims and survivors face when seeking help. We will treat all disclosures seriously, sensitively, and confidentially, ensuring individuals are listened to, believed, and involved in decisions affecting them. We are committed to delivering tailored support that reflects the needs and circumstances of each individual.

To help tenants access support as early as possible, we will promote awareness of domestic abuse through communications, campaigns, tenant engagement activities, and information resources. We will clearly set out the support available through the Council and signpost tenants to specialist services where appropriate. As a White Ribbon accredited organisation, we will continue to champion initiatives that challenge domestic abuse, promote healthy relationships, and increase awareness within our communities.

3. Policy Statement

The Council has a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse and will take all reasonable steps to support victims and survivors, hold perpetrators accountable for their actions and work collaboratively with partner agencies to reduce harm and improve outcomes.

The Council will:

- Take all disclosures of domestic abuse seriously.
- Adopt a survivor-centred, non-judgemental and believing approach.
- Prioritise the safety and wellbeing of victims, survivors and their children.
- Provide accessible and inclusive services.
- Work collaboratively with specialist support organisations and statutory agencies.
- Take appropriate action to address perpetrator behaviour where lawful and proportionate.
- Promote awareness and understanding of domestic abuse across services and communities

4. Definition of Domestic Abuse

This policy applies to all tenants of BBC. We have a separate domestic abuse policy for residents and employees who are experiencing domestic abuse.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 provided a definition of domestic abuse as: *Any single incident, course of conduct or pattern of abusive behaviour between individuals aged 16 or over who are "personally connected" to each other as a result of being, or having been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. Children who see, hear or experience the effects of the abuse and are related to either of the parties are also considered victims of domestic abuse*.

Behaviour is abusive if it consists of any of the following:

- Physical orf sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic abuse
- Psychological abuse
- Emotional abuse

This includes incidents where the abusive party directs their behaviour at another person (e.g. a child)

Physical abuse includes slapping, burning, beating, kicking, biting, pinching, stabbing and other violent behaviours; these can lead to permanent injuries or death.

Sexual abuse or assault is when someone intentionally touches another person in a sexual manner, without that person's consent.

Controlling behaviour includes a range of acts designed to make a person feel subordinate and/or dependent by actions that isolates them from sources of support, exploits their resources and capacities for personal gain, and deprives them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

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

Economic abuse means any behaviours that has a substantial adverse effect on someone's ability to acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or obtain goods or services.

Psychological abuse, including emotional abuse, may take the form of intimidation, coercion, threats, harassment, humiliation, bullying, swearing or shouting. It also could be enforced social isolation (for example, preventing someone from accessing a service or seeing friends), failure to respect privacy/dignity or online bullying.

This definition includes honour based abuse (HBA), female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage. It is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

"Personally connected" is defined in the act as people who:

- Are married to each other
- Are civil partners of each other
- Have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement is still in place)
- Have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement is still in place)
- Are, or have been in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- Are, or have been, parents of the child or children
- Are relatives

It does not matter whether the behaviours consist of a single incident or part of an ongoing pattern of behaviour.

If a tenant tells us about abuse in other circumstances, such as abuse by a carer, we will consider appropriate action under our Safeguarding Policy.

5. Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Principles

The Council is committed to aligning its approach with the principles of the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA), which seeks to improve the housing sector's response to domestic abuse through a consistent set of standards and best practices.

The Council will ensure that its response to domestic abuse is:

- Survivor-led;
- Safety-focused;
- Accessible and inclusive;
- Trauma-informed;
- Non-judgemental;
- Collaborative;
- Accountable;
- Person-centred.

In delivering this Policy, the Council will seek to uphold the values of respect, empowerment, integrity, collaboration and belief in victim and survivor experiences.

6. Our Commitments

Ensure all tenants are aware of the Council's approach to domestic abuse, the support available, and how to access advice and assistance. This includes victims and survivors, those concerned about someone else, and individuals who may be perpetrating domestic abuse.

Ensure that tenants affected by domestic abuse can access timely, appropriate, and effective advice, support, and assistance, including referral and signposting to specialist agencies and services where required.

Provide a safe, supportive, and confidential environment in which tenants feel able to disclose experiences of domestic abuse, confident that they will be treated with dignity, sensitivity, and respect.

Equip staff with the training, guidance, and resources necessary to identify, respond to, and support tenants affected by domestic abuse, including both victims/survivors and perpetrators.

Establish a clear and consistent framework for responding to reports of domestic abuse and for managing cases involving tenants identified as perpetrators of abuse.

Work collaboratively with partner organisations, statutory agencies, and specialist domestic abuse services to deliver a coordinated and effective response that reflects the needs, circumstances, risks, and wishes of those involved.

Adopt a person-centred and trauma-informed approach, recognising that every experience of domestic abuse is different and that outcomes and interventions must be tailored to individual circumstances.

Raise awareness of domestic abuse within our communities and promote early intervention to help prevent abuse, reduce harm, and support individuals to remain safe in their homes wherever possible.

7. Supporting a tenant experiencing domestic abuse

The Council takes all reports and disclosures of domestic abuse seriously and is committed to providing a timely, supportive, and effective response. All tenants who disclose domestic abuse will be treated with dignity, respect, and sensitivity, and their concerns will be taken seriously. Through the implementation of robust policies, procedures, and specialist support services, the Council will take all reasonable steps to assist tenants who are experiencing domestic abuse.

Tenants can report domestic abuse through any contact they have with the Council, including via our website, by telephone, email, in person, or in writing. Information about how to access support will be made available through a range of communication channels. Where there is an immediate risk to life or safety, individuals should contact the Police on 999.

The Council has a dedicated Domestic Abuse Team, which includes qualified Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) who provide specialist, confidential support to tenants affected by domestic abuse. Our response is underpinned by a trauma-informed approach, recognising the impact that abuse can have on individuals and ensuring support is delivered in a way that promotes safety, empowerment, and recovery.

Council staff receive training to help them recognise the signs and indicators of domestic abuse and understand how to respond appropriately. Staff are equipped to manage disclosures sensitively, maintain confidentiality where appropriate, and ensure concerns are referred to the relevant services for specialist support and intervention.

8. Support to Tenants

If you report an incidence of domestic abuse to us, we will respond within one working day and will discuss the next steps with you.

We will offer you a meeting with an IDVA and will have regard to your circumstances and preferences wherever possible.

We will carry out a DASH 2009 risk assessment, which is a UK wide recognised and accredited form used by partner organisations to assess risk and plan further support.

We will agree with you how you wish to communicate with us (e.g phone, in person).

We will take into account the needs of each individual case and recognise our response needs to be based on a risk assessment of your personal circumstances. We will advise about the possible course of actions open to you, which may require a response to an immediate situation and/or support in the longer term.

We will make sure the survivor of domestic abuse is always aware of our response and that they agree with any actions, including referrals to specialist support, target hardening/sanctuary support (additional security measures within the home) and offers of alternative accommodation.

We will provide advice and assistance around alternative accommodation, including refuge and move on and arrange target hardening if this is a safe option.

We appreciate that survivors of domestic abuse may not want to take legal action, but we will offer advice if it is something they wish to pursue. This may include helping the survivor to access legal advice around Non Molestation Orders/Occupations Orders, and we will liaise internally around tenancy matters and possession proceeding.

We will where appropriate safeguard adults and children who experience domestic abuse. Employees are trained in safeguarding referrals and referrals will be in line with our Safeguarding Policy.

Our support will continue for as long as it is required, working with the survivor until they feel their circumstances have been appropriately addressed and they are able to move forward safely.

Our support will be based on your individual needs. We recognise that not all people see themselves as victims and we will ensure we do not label you as such and will always treat people experiencing domestic abuse in a supportive and non-judgemental way.

9. Partnership Working

We will create and regularly update a directory of domestic abuse services, accessible through our website, providing information on local and national organisations that offer advice, support, advocacy, and specialist assistance to those affected by domestic abuse.

We will work collaboratively with partner agencies and specialist services across Basildon and the surrounding areas to ensure a coordinated and effective response to domestic abuse.

We will actively participate in multi-agency arrangements, including the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), information-sharing processes with Essex Police, and partnership working through the Safer Basildon Partnership, to improve outcomes for victims and survivors.

We will contribute to the development of strategic responses to domestic abuse by working with Essex County Council and partner organisations through the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board (SETDAB), helping to influence and support local priorities and service delivery.

We will work in partnership with relevant agencies to support, engage with, and signpost perpetrators of domestic abuse who acknowledge their behaviour and wish to access appropriate interventions to achieve positive change.

We recognise and respect every tenant's right to privacy and will never pressure individuals to disclose information they do not wish to share.

In delivering support and safeguarding individuals, there may be circumstances where information needs to be shared with other organisations. Wherever possible, we will seek the tenant's consent before sharing information. Information will only be shared without consent where there is a legal obligation to do so, or where there are safeguarding concerns relating to a child, vulnerable adult, or an immediate risk of serious harm.

10. Perpetrator Accountability

We take a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse and are committed to holding perpetrators accountable for their actions. Our response will always be victim and survivor-centred, with the safety, wellbeing, and wishes of those affected being a primary consideration when determining the most appropriate course of action.

Where appropriate, we will work with partner agencies to address abusive behaviour and reduce the risk of further harm. We will encourage perpetrators to acknowledge and take responsibility for their actions and will support referrals to appropriate specialist services and behaviour change programmes designed to address abusive and controlling behaviour.

Any action taken will be proportionate to the circumstances of the case and informed by risk, safeguarding considerations, and the needs and safety of victims and survivors.

11. Equality, Accessibility and Inclusion

We recognise that domestic abuse is a gendered crime and disproportionately affects women and is perpetrated by men.

We are committed to ensure our services are accessible to all tenants and that all tenants can access services in the way they need. Tenants can report domestic abuse in a variety of ways and the Council website enables translation into other languages and different formats can be requested (accessible PDF, large print, easy read, audio recordings or braille.)We can also arrange independent translators and interpreters when required.

We recognise that each person's experience of domestic abuse is unique and may be influenced by their personal circumstances, identity, background, and lived experiences. We acknowledge the impact of intersectionality and understand that some tenants may face multiple and overlapping forms of discrimination, disadvantage, or barriers to accessing support. We will take account of each individual's circumstances and needs when determining the most appropriate support and response.

Domestic abuse can affect anyone, regardless of age, sex, gender identity, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, religion, or socio-economic background. However, we recognise that some groups may be disproportionately affected by domestic abuse, experience specific forms of abuse, or face additional cultural, social, economic, or practical barriers to seeking help. We are committed to ensuring that our services are accessible, inclusive, and responsive to these differing needs.

We will deliver support in a way that is person-centred, trauma-informed, and culturally sensitive, recognising the diverse experiences of our tenants and adapting our approach accordingly.
To support this commitment, we will provide staff with training and guidance to help them understand how domestic abuse can affect individuals differently and how to identify and respond to the specific needs of diverse groups. We will work in partnership with specialist organisations and community-based services that have the knowledge, expertise, and experience to support tenants with a wide range of needs, ensuring that individuals can access the most appropriate advice, support, and interventions.

12. Monitoring, Compliance and Assurance

The Council will monitor the implementation of this Policy to ensure it remains effective, compliant with legislation and aligned to good practice.

The Policy will be reviewed at least every three years or sooner where there are significant legislative, regulatory or operational changes.

Feedback from victims, survivors, staff and partner organisations will be used to inform future improvements and service development.

13. 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.

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.		Providing targeted support to those affected by domestic abuse, alongside behaviour change programmes for perpetrators where required, can contribute to safer, stronger communities and reduce the risk of further harm.		
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.			By addressing domestic abuse across the Borough, through support for both survivors and perpetrators, we can improve the quality of life of those affected and help them make a positive contribution to their communities.	
Promise			Addressing domestic	

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.			abuse within our estates will help improve residents' quality of life by enabling them to access opportunities and make choices free from the impact and control of abuse.	
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.			We will continue to lead and promote specialist domestic abuse services in housing authorities, highlighting the positive impact of this work in improving outcomes and creating better futures for tenants.	

14. 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
- DA Act 2021 - Domestic Abuse Act 2021 - GOV.UK