

To: Cabinet
Date: 09 July 2025
Report of: Liz Jones, ASBIT Manager and Domestic Abuse Lead
Title of Report: Domestic Abuse Policy for Service Users

Summary and recommendations	
Decision being taken:	The Cabinet to approve the Domestic Abuse Policy for Service Users.
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Lubna Arshad, Safer Communities
Corporate Priority:	Thriving Communities
Policy Framework:	No

Recommendation(s): That Cabinet resolves to:
1. Approve the Domestic Abuse Policy for Service users (Appendix 1) 2. Delegate authority to the Domestic Abuse Lead, to make minor changes in the future to reflect any relevant changes in legislation, guidance or practice.

Introduction and background

1. The Council is working towards achieving the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation, which is a set of standards and process that helps housing providers respond to domestic abuse. It is the UK's benchmark for how housing providers should respond to domestic abuse.
2. The purpose of the DAHA accreditation is to improve the response to domestic abuse by spotting the signs and intervening early to keep survivors safe and hold reported abusers to account.
3. The main benefit of achieving DAHA accreditation is enabling housing providers to deliver safe and effective responses to domestic abuse and reduce the human, social and economic costs of domestic abuse.
4. A requirement to achieve accreditation is for the Council to have two separate domestic abuse policies; one for service users and one for staff. The People Team are reviewing the staff policy.

Domestic Abuse Policy for Service Users

5. The Domestic Abuse Policy for Service users sets out the Council's objectives to ensure anyone impacted by domestic abuse will receive appropriate client-led support from trained staff and be signposted or referred to specialist services to prevent further harm.
6. The policy objectives are:
 - Improve the quality of the Council's workforce by providing training, and a raised understanding of the dynamics and impact of domestic abuse.
 - Maintain a pool of domestic abuse specialists who can provide guidance, listening support and risk identification.
 - Early identification of domestic abuse to ensure survivors receive a trauma-informed, client-led response.
 - Provide a sanctuary for any survivor fleeing domestic abuse.
 - Employees will know how to sign-post reported abusers for support to change their behaviours.
7. The policy has been developed with input from:
 - Survivors of domestic abuse
 - Domestic Abuse Champions
 - Unison
 - Oxford City Council's Policy Officers Group
 - Public Consultation

Communication and training

8. The policy will be available to citizens on the Oxford City Council website in both the Domestic Abuse section and within the Housing advice for victims of domestic abuse section. This will provide information to survivors so they can feel confident that they will be supported and be believed if they contact the Council.
9. The policy will be shared with relevant staff and managers and training undertaken.
10. The policy is owned by the Domestic Abuse Lead for the Council.

Other policy implications

11. The policy does not replace any other policy.
12. Disclosures requiring a safeguarding response will be dealt with under the Council's Safeguarding Policy.

Alternative Options Considered

13. No policy adopted. The Council would be unable to fulfil its DAHA and legal obligations listed below.

Financial implications

14. There are no financial implications.

Legal issues

15. This policy is in response to the Council's obligations under the:
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
 - Part VI and Part VII Housing Act 1996
 - Social Housing Regulation Act 2021
 - Domestic Abuse Act 2021
16. Specifically, following the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Oxford City Council has a statutory duty to provide safe accommodation for survivors of domestic abuse and their children. The policy reflects the Council's commitment to providing a holistic approach to service users who are fleeing domestic abuse and require a place of safety. It gives confidence to victims/survivors to come forward and seek help knowing that their disclosure will be taken seriously and that they have choices.
17. Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) were established on a statutory basis by the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004. Oxford Safer Communities Partnership (OSCP) is responsible for commissioning DHRs following a domestic abuse related homicide or suicide. The OSCP is Chaired and managed by the Community Safety Service within the Council. The policy outlines the commitment of the Council to ensure their service users are kept safe from further harm.

Level of risk

18. If the policy is not approved the Council will not achieve DAHA accreditation.
19. Un-trained staff dealing with domestic abuse disclosures which will impact on the victim, and any children, as well as the staff.

Equalities impact

20. Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed (Appendix 2)

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