

To: Cabinet
Date: 22 October 2025
Report of: Liz Jones, ASBIT Manager and Domestic Abuse Lead
Title of Report: Domestic Abuse Policy for Staff

Summary and recommendations	
Decision being taken:	The Cabinet to approve the Domestic Abuse Policy for Staff.
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 Staff (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.

Appendix No.	Appendix Title	Exempt from Publication
Appendix 1	Domestic Abuse Policy for Staff	No
Appendix 2	Equality Impact Assessment	No

Introduction and background

1. Oxford City Council (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, including members of staff.

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. The Council employs 970 people with about 60% being female. Research states that at any one time 10% of females will be experience abuse by a partner or family member. It is plausible that there are around 60 females currently working for the Council who are affected by domestic abuse, therefore it is imperative that the Council is a safe space to disclose and access appropriate support. Males can also be victims, but women are disproportionately impacted.
5. 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 Domestic Abuse Policy for Service Users was approved by Cabinet on 9 July 2025.

Domestic Abuse Policy for Staff

6. The Domestic Abuse Policy for Staff sets out the Council's commitment to support employee health and wellbeing at work, which includes those affected by domestic abuse. The Policy outlines:
 - the roles and responsibilities for Council staff to create a safe space for disclosure, support and safety.
 - how concerns can be raised and reported so appropriate support can be provided for staff affected by domestic abuse.
 - How perpetrators who are employees can be held accountable for their actions and be offered support to change their behaviour.

Policy development

7. The policy has been developed with input from
 - Survivors of domestic abuse
 - Domestic Abuse Champions
 - Unison
 - The People's Team

Communication and training

8. The policy will be available to employees in the Policy section on the Intranet. This will provide information to survivors so they can feel confident that they will be supported and be believed if they disclose the abuse to their line managers or colleagues.
 - The policy will be shared with relevant staff and managers and training undertaken.
 - The policy is owned by the Domestic Abuse Lead for the Council.

Other policy implications

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

Alternative Options Considered

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

Financial implications

12. There are no financial implications.

Legal issues

13. This policy is in response to the Council's obligations under the:
 - Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
 - Part V1 and Part VII Housing Act 1996
 - Social Housing Regulation Act 2021
 - Domestic Abuse Act 2021
14. Specifically, following the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the 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 employees 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.
15. 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 employees are kept safe from further harm.

Level of risk

16. If the policy is not approved the Council will not achieve DAHA accreditation.
17. Employees impacted by domestic abuse may not feel safe or confident to disclose which will lead to further harm from abuse and/or violence.
18. Employees impacted by domestic abuse may not receive the appropriate internal support following a disclosure, which may lead to further harm from abuse and/or violence.

Equalities impact

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

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