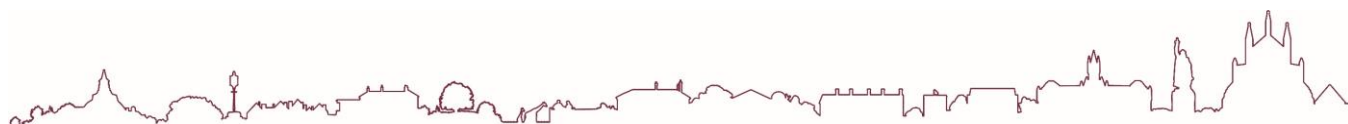


Winchester City Council
Residents' Domestic Abuse Support Policy

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1. Policy statement and objectives

- 1.1 Winchester City Council has a duty of care to all its residents.
- 1.2 Domestic abuse is a serious crime, and we believe no person should live in fear of violence or abuse. This policy forms part of our broader approach to safeguarding and sets out how we will support our residents who are experiencing domestic abuse.
- 1.3 We will work in partnership with specialist agencies to provide a coordinated response and deliver tailored support to individuals reporting incidents of domestic abuse.
- 1.4 We understand that there are many barriers to reporting domestic abuse but encourage all residents to feel reassured in the knowledge that should they wish to talk to someone about experiencing domestic abuse, the matter will be treated with empathy and confidentiality.
- 1.5 The objectives of this policy are as follows:
 - To ensure that all residents who ask for help in addressing domestic abuse can access appropriate advice and support, including signposting to other agencies.
 - To ensure that all residents experiencing domestic abuse and seeking support are confident that their situation will be handled sympathetically and confidentially.
 - To establish a framework for responding to a resident who is identified as being a perpetrator of domestic abuse.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy supports all Winchester City Council residents.
- 2.2 There is a separate internal policy for employees of Winchester City Council who are experiencing domestic abuse.

3. Definition of domestic abuse

- 3.1 The Home Office definition of domestic abuse is:

“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.”

- 3.2 Behaviour is abuse if it consists of any of the following:

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

Definitions and examples of these types of domestic abuse are included at the end of this policy.

3.3 “Personally connected” is defined in the Domestic Abuse Act (2021) as people who:

- Are married to each other
- Are civil partners to each other
- Have agreed to marry one another
- Have entered into a civil partnership agreement
- Are – or have been – in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- Are – or have been – parents of the same child or children
- Are relatives

3.4 As a council, we also recognise forms of domestic abuse that are not included in this statutory definition including so-called “honour” based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.

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

3.6 If a resident tells us about abuse in other circumstances, such as abuse by a paid carer, we will consider appropriate action under our wider safeguarding procedures.

4. Supporting a resident experiencing domestic abuse

Disclosure:

4.1 All residents who disclose domestic abuse to the council will be treated with dignity and respect, and their reports taken seriously.

4.2. Residents can choose to report domestic abuse through any contact they have with the council. This could be by telephone, email, in person, or in writing. We will make sure everyone can report domestic abuse to us, providing interpreters and translating information into other languages or formats as needed.

4.3. Public facing staff are also trained to recognise the signs of domestic abuse during any interaction they may have with residents.

Support:

- 4.4. There are a variety of ways that, as a council, we can support residents who have lived experience of domestic abuse. Throughout the process of support, residents will have the choice of a male or female officer who will work with them in a trauma-informed way, using a person-centred approach.
 - 4.5. The exact response will vary depending on the exact circumstances of the case, but may include:
 - Facilitating referrals to external forms of support.
 - Working in partnership with other involved agencies to ensure residents are safe (see section 7 – partnership working).
 - Providing advice and assistance on alternative accommodation. This could be temporary accommodation or a permanent move. If the person experiencing domestic abuse becomes homeless because of their experience, they will be automatically recognised as homeless through no fault of their own and will be identified as having a priority need for safe housing as set out in Section 189 of the Housing Act 1996 (amended by Pt. 7, s. 78 Domestic Abuse Act 2021).
 - Providing a Tenancy Sustainment Officer to assist them with support. For more information on the support available, please see the tenancy sustainment leaflet on our website - [Tenancy Support Service - Winchester City Council](#)
 - Where the victim/survivor of domestic abuse wishes to stay in their home once a perpetrator has left, arranging for additional security measures (target hardening) and any necessary repair work based on the assessment of risk.
 - Offering advice and signposting to additional support on legal action where this is something they want to pursue.
 - 4.6. The council will continue to support all residents who disclose domestic abuse until they are satisfied that their situation has been resolved. We will use any tools and powers available to us as both a housing provider and local authority to reduce the risk of further harm and ensure perpetrator accountability.
- 5. Perpetrator accountability**
- 5.1. A key part of the council's approach to domestic abuse is holding perpetrators of abuse to account. We will work in partnership with appropriate agencies to support and signpost perpetrators of domestic abuse who recognise and want to change their behaviour.

- 5.2 Our approach is survivor centred, and we will consider the views and ongoing safety of the victim/survivor when deciding the most appropriate course of action.
- 5.3 We recognise that housing professionals are in an ideal position to engage and build trust with perpetrators who are currently council tenants. Where appropriate we will use this position to encourage perpetrators to access the right support which might include behaviour intervention, mental health support and substance use services.
- 5.4. Where a perpetrator is identified as a council tenant, this will be recorded on our case management system.

6. Partnership working

- 6.1 We recognise the importance of working collaboratively with partners and other agencies in Winchester and beyond when responding to incidents of domestic abuse. This might include:
- Participating and sharing information through the Multi Agency Risk Management Conference (MARAC) and Hampshire Constabulary.
 - Influencing and agreeing strategic priorities with Hampshire County Council (commissioner of domestic abuse services in Winchester) through the Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership.
 - Participating in and supporting the Winchester Domestic Abuse Forum.
 - Working with partners through the Community Safety Partnership.
- 6.2 Hampshire County Council, as the upper tier local authority, commissions domestic abuse accommodation and community support across the county, including in the Winchester district. The council works in partnership and cooperates with Hampshire County Council to enable a range of safe accommodation options.
- 6.3 We maintain an up-to-date directory of local and national domestic abuse support services on our [website](#).

7. Confidentiality and information sharing

- 7.1 We understand that maintaining confidentiality can be essential to ensuring the safety of the resident concerned and encouraging disclosure.

However, the council's statutory duty to work in partnership with other agencies includes the need to share information where the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult must be paramount. This means that considerations of confidentiality that might apply to other situations within the council should not be allowed to override the right of the individual to be protected from harm.

- 7.2 Wherever possible, consent from a vulnerable adult should be obtained before a referral to a partner organisation is made, unless doing so places the individual at further risk or would result in significant delay.
- 7.3 Any documentation of domestic abuse disclosures will be retained in accordance with the council's Data Retention Policy.

8. Equality and intersectionality

- 8.1 Domestic abuse occurs across society, regardless of characteristics such as age, sex, gender identity, race, religion, sexuality, disability, pregnancy, immigration status, wealth, geography, and level of education (list not exhaustive).
- 8.2 However, the council recognise that certain people are disproportionately affected or particularly vulnerable to specific forms of abuse. These factors will be considered as part of the risk assessment process to ensure that appropriate support is available.
- 8.3. For example, domestic abuse is a gendered crime. Whilst people of all genders can be affected, females are disproportionately the victims and men disproportionately the perpetrators. The latest Crime Survey for England and Wales data estimates that 1.6 million females and 757,000 males experienced domestic abuse in 2020.
- 8.4 We also recognise intersectionality¹ and understand that individuals may face multiple and interrelated forms of discrimination.
- 8.5 We recognise the importance of listening to the views of our residents with lived experience of domestic abuse to improve the way we work. We will do this through informal conversations, working groups, and ongoing work with Hampshire County Council on survivor voice.
- 8.6 A full equalities impact assessment has been completed for this policy and the wider DAHA project. Although the EIA highlighted that some groups are disproportionately affected by and/or particularly vulnerable to domestic abuse, it is important to note that domestic abuse can still affect anyone. As a council we aim to balance this universality with an understanding of intersectionality and how experiences of domestic abuse are defined by individual backgrounds and circumstances.
- 8.7. Further information on how to access support including support for specific communities can be found on the council's domestic abuse webpage.

9. Policy governance

¹ The term "intersectionality" refers to the ways that different forms of discrimination interact with each other and create increased negative impacts. We recognise that our residents are shaped by their membership of multiple interconnected social categories.

- 9.1 This policy will be reviewed and updated every three years, or more frequently in light of significant legislation changes or lessons learnt.
- 9.2 Residents can access the policy on our website or request a paper copy from the council. We can also provide an interpretation or translation of this policy where required.

The council will make sure residents are aware of this policy through links in our Tenants Handbook, tenancy agreement and on other correspondence.

Appendix 1: Types of domestic abuse

Physical abuse includes slapping, burning, beating, kicking, biting, pinching, stabbing and punching and can lead to permanent injuries and sometimes 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 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 includes 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.

Economic abuse means any behaviour 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.

Appendix 2: Policy context

This policy supports the following national legislation:

- Anti-social Behaviour Act (2003)
- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act (2014)
- Care Act (2014)
- Crime and Security Act (2010)
- Data Protection Act (2018)
- Domestic Abuse Act (2021)
- Domestic Abuse Crime and Victims Act (2004)
- Equality Act (2010) and Public Sector Equality Duty
- Health and Safety (consultation with employees) Regulations (1996)
- Healthy and Safety at Work Act (1974)
- Housing Act (1996)
- Local Government Act (1972)
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1992)
- Policing and Crime Act (2009)
- Protection from Harassment Act (1997)
- Serious Crime Act (2015)

This policy links to the following existing policies and procedures:

- WCC Workplace Domestic Abuse Support Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Tenancy Policy
- Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership Strategy
- Safeguarding policy and procedures
- Landlord services domestic abuse procedure