# Diversity Impact Assessment

Title: Domestic Abuse Policy

Date: Review completed in September 2024

Lead Officer: Aisling Sims – Customer Insight and Data Manager

1. **Summary description of the proposed change**

*What is the change to policy / service / new project that is being proposed?*

*How does it compare with the current situation?*

Over the past year we the team have been working closely with the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA), a national partnership which has a mission to improve the response of housing to domestic abuse. Housing Services are currently working through the accreditation process to meet the DAHA standards. By working with specialists in this field and adopting their approach through our policy and procedures we hope to continually develop the service’s approach to domestic abuse.

With this in mind, a periodic review of the housing Domestic Abuse Policy has been carried out, with the following minor updates:

* Following a general review and advice from the regional DAHA lead, we have made some of the language more trauma informed.
* Included references to ‘survivor’ as well as victim.

The purpose of the changes was to use best practice language that was supportive of victims/survivors and not blaming and judgemental

1. **Summary of evidence used to support this assessment**

* *Eg: Feedback from consultation, performance information, service user records etc.*
* *Eg: Comparison of service user profile with Medway Community Profile*
* Since the policy was first introduced in 2017, the prevalence of Domestic Abuse in Medway and the affect it has on housing has highlighted the need for specialised assistance and staff awareness when dealing with domestic abuse cases.
* Since 2017, the number of referrals to the Sanctuary scheme has increased by 79.5% with 188 referrals during the 2023/24 year.
* In the same timeframe the number of approaches to the Housing Options team due to domestic abuse has also increased by 137.5%, with 529 approaches during the 2023/24 year.
* By striving to maintain the standards set out by DAHA, we will ensure that the Housing Service offers a sensitive and effective approach to residents who are affected by domestic abuse.

1. **What is the likely impact of the proposed change?**

*Is it likely to :*

* *Adversely impact on one or more of the protected characteristic groups?*
* *Advance equality of opportunity for one or more of the protected characteristic groups?*

*Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don’t?*

Protected Characteristic groups:

Age: no impact

Disability: no impact

Gender reassignment: no impact

Marriage/civil partnership: no impact

Pregnancy/maternity: no impact

Race: no impact

Religion/belief: no impact

Sex: policy will advance equality

Sexual orientation: no impact

Other (e.g. low income groups): no impact

1. **Summary of the likely impacts**

* *Who will be affected?*
* *How will they be affected?*

It has not been identified that this policy will have a negative impact on any protected characteristics.

It is assumed that some groups may be more likely to experience domestic abuse though this policy and the support that Housing Services can offer will be applied promoted and applied equally to ensure that anyone in need can access.

1. **What actions can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impacts, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations?**

* *Are there alternative providers?*
* *What alternative ways can the Council provide the service?*
* *Can demand for services be managed differently*

Through awareness raising and training, staff will also be able to make referrals or sign post to additional and specialist support depending on the needs of the victim/survivor.

## **Action plan**

*Actions to mitigate adverse impact, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations and/or obtain new evidence*

Provide staff with appropriate training and support in relation to domestic violence – ongoing action

Ensure that our approach to Domestic Abuse meets the requirements for DAHA accreditation – by April 2025.

Monitor the number of Domestic Abuse cases received within each area of the Housing Service – annual monitoring.

Consider the use of markers on housing systems to monitor the reports of DA within the HRA housing stock – April 2025.

## **Recommendation**

*The recommendation by the lead officer should be stated below. This may be:*

* *to proceed with the change, implementing the Action Plan if appropriate*
* *consider alternatives*
* *gather further evidence*

*If the recommendation is to proceed with the change and there are no actions that can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impact, it is important to state why.*

Proceed with the reviewed policy.

## **Authorisation**

*The authorising officer is consenting that:*

* *the recommendation can be implemented*
* *sufficient evidence has been obtained and appropriate mitigation is planned*
* *the Action Plan will be incorporated into the relevant Service Plan and monitored*

Authorising Officer: Rebecca Wilcox – Chief Housing Officer

Date: September 2024