

Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 placed new duties on local authorities, requiring tier 2 councils (district & borough councils) to co-operate with the lead local authority, so far as is reasonably practicable.</p> <p>Section 84(4) of the 2021 Act requires persons exercising public functions, to have regard to the guidance in the exercise of those functions.</p> <p>The Act requires that the council must ensure that victims of domestic abuse and their children can access the right support in safe accommodation when they need it.</p> <p>New Forest District Council (NFDC), through the statutory functions of the Community Safety Partnership 'Safer New Forest', recognises Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) as a strategic priority in supporting victims/survivors and tackling offenders.</p> <p>NFDC's Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028 sets out to prioritise domestic abuse with 4 key priority areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Awareness & early intervention- Workforce development- High quality service provision- Multi-agency working and pathway development. <p>The priorities are aligned to Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership and informed by the national Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and serious violence duty.</p>

Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet approve the draft Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028 for formal consultation.
Reasons for recommendation(s)	<p>The Domestic Abuse Strategy supports the objectives within the Corporate Plan as outlined below:</p> <p>People - Helping people in the greatest need and creating balanced, resilient, and healthy communities who feel safe and supported with easy access to services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Priority 1: Helping those in our community with the greatest need. - Priority 2: Empowering our residents to live healthy, connected and fulfilling lives. <p>The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 placed new duties on local authorities, requiring tier 2 councils (district & borough councils) to cooperate with the lead local authority, so far as is reasonably practicable.</p> <p>Section 84(4) of the 2021 Act requires persons exercising public functions, to have regard to the guidance in the exercise of those functions. The Act requires that the council must ensure that victims of domestic abuse and their children can access the right support in safe accommodation when they need it.</p> <p>The implementation of the Domestic Abuse Strategy outline the council's commitment to meeting its obligations of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.</p>
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Dan Poole
Strategic Director(s)	Richard Knott – Housing & Communities
Officer Contact	Brian Byrne Service Manager – Community Safety & Support

Introduction and background

1. Domestic abuse is recognised as one of the most harmful crimes in society with far reaching and long-lasting consequences impacting on both adults and children.
2. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 outlines the requirement for tier 1 local authorities to create and implement a Domestic Abuse Strategy, including strategic priorities for the Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership (HDAP).
3. The HDAP outlines four strategic priorities:
 - **Prevention:** providing resources and education to prevent domestic abuse through early intervention
 - **Professional Care:** supporting victims and survivors, including professional care for children and young people
 - **Pursuing:** actively identifying and engaging perpetrators
 - **Partnership:** working together as one community to tackle domestic abuse
4. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) placed new duties and functions on Local Authorities under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to provide support for domestic abuse survivors and their children residing in safe accommodation. The aim is to ensure victim-survivors of domestic abuse have access to the right accommodation-based support when they need it.
5. In recognising the continued prevalence of domestic abuse, acknowledging underreporting and the devastating impact it has on the individual, their family, community and wider society Officers have drafted a 4-year Domestic Abuse Strategy to set the aims for the council.
6. The development of this strategy sets out NFDC vision's, priorities and commitments with the overall aim of reducing incidents of domestic abuse to ensure all those affected receive appropriate support. This strategy fulfils our statutory requirements as set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and also incorporates Violence Against Women and Girls Agenda (VAWG agenda) and the Serious Violence Duty 2022.

7. The Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028 is based on 4 priorities:
 - Awareness & early intervention
 - Workforce development
 - High quality service provision
 - Multi-agency working and pathway development.
8. The draft strategy has been through informal consultation with NFDC staff and members of the New Forest Domestic Abuse Forum. Feedback was reviewed and is reflected in the draft strategy. Overall, responses were supportive of the priorities and commitments outlined.

Corporate plan priorities

9. The Domestic Abuse Strategy supports the Corporate Plan 2024/28 priorities:

People - Helping people in the greatest need and creating balanced, resilient, and healthy communities who feel safe and supported with easy access to services.

- **Priority 1:** Helping those in our community with the greatest need.
- **Priority 2:** Empowering our residents to live healthy, connected and fulfilling lives.

Options appraisal

10. The Domestic Abuse Strategy has been considered and it is deemed appropriate and proportionate for NFDC to publish these documents as best practice.
11. The Domestic Abuse Strategy has been devised with regard to the Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership (HDAP) strategy. Through alignment, this will enable effective delivery of combined commissioned and third sector support and prevent services.

Consultation undertaken

12. The New Forest Domestic Abuse Forum, convened by NFDC and chaired by the Community Safety Manager (safeguarding lead officer and deputy single point of contact for domestic abuse).
13. The forum consists of partners from domestic abuse commissioned services, Integrated Care Board through representation of midwifery and Primary Care services, Victim Support, Hampshire Constabulary, NFDC Housing Service and third sector services.

14. The Domestic Abuse Strategy was developed and reviewed by all partners of the forum, with views and recommendations incorporated into the draft Domestic Abuse Strategy.
15. Cllr Dan Poole, Portfolio holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing and chair of the Safer New Forest Strategy and Delivery Group, following consultation has endorsed the strategy as outlined in the Foreword (Appendix 1).
16. The Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel supported the proposed draft Domestic Abuse Strategy. Members recognised staff training had been identified as a key priority which would enhance early identification and enable staff to respond to domestic abuse. This would be supported with a single point of contact within service areas. It was also noted that there would be awareness campaigns and information would be provided, to raise awareness and increase knowledge of this underreported crime.

Financial and resource implications

17. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 placed new duties on local authorities across England to ensure that victims of domestic abuse and their children can access the right support in safe accommodation when they need it.
18. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC – now MHCLG) provided new burden funding of £257 million allocated to local authorities for delivery of their duties, which included nearly £4.8m for Hampshire, and just over £70k by NFDC.
19. Hampshire County Council has provided a Whole Housing Approach (WHA) Grant of £53,364, which we are working with Stop Domestic Abuse to provide a 1-year co-located post to ensure that all victim-survivors of domestic abuse can access appropriate support.

Legal implications

20. The implementation of the Domestic Abuse Strategy outline the council's commitment to meeting its obligations of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Risk assessment

21. Operational delivery of the strategic priorities is risk assessed and in line with health and safety and lone working procedures.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

22. Whilst the report has no direct implications, this may present opportunities to contribute to the Council's climate objectives.

Equalities implications

23. The proposed strategy improve the council's response to domestic abuse for victim-survivors. It is recognised that every individual will have unique needs and experiences and people will face additional barriers and concerns in seeking and accessing help and support, including those in marginalised groups. The strategy sets out the council's commitment to supporting and preventing domestic abuse.

Crime and disorder implications

24. The objectives of the Domestic Abuse is to support and protect victims-survivors of domestic abuse from the harm of domestic abuse.
25. Prevention of perpetrated domestic abuse behaviours is supported by a range of perpetrator programmes aimed at encouraging healthy, non-abusive relationships, aimed at preventing reoffending behaviours.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

26. The collection, retention and deletion of resident's data is governed by GDPR and associated guidance. All data is collected and maintained in line with the required legislation and shared in accordance with defined and established information sharing protocols and procedures.

New Forest National Park / Cranborne Chase National Landscape implications

27. The objectives as outlined within the strategy are to support all residents of the New Forest district area. As partners of the Safer New Forest Strategy and Delivery Group, the National Park work alongside statutory partners in keeping residents and visitors safe and free from harm.

Conclusion

28. The Domestic Abuse Strategy sets out the council's strategic approach and priorities in increasing early awareness of DA through employee development and training. Placing the client at the centre, working in partnership with key agencies and commissioned support and prevent services to reduce the incident rate and harm of DA.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Draft NFDC Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028

Appendix 2 – Draft Domestic Abuse Strategy Action Plan

Background Papers:

Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership Strategy 2023-2025
[domestic-abuse-strategy-2023.pdf](#)