

Cabinet – 4 March 2026

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 (County Council), 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 public consultation evidenced 94% (17 out of 18) of respondents supported the four priorities.</p> <p>The public consultation was reviewed by EMT on 25 November 2025 and Housing &</p>

	Community Overview & Scrutiny Panel on 21 st January 2026. Findings were noted supporting the implementation of the strategy through to Cabinet.
Recommendation(s)	<p>That Cabinet:</p> <p>1. Notes the findings of the public consultation conducted on the NFDC Domestic Abuse Strategy; and</p> <p>2. Approves the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028.</p>
Reasons for recommendation(s)	<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. 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 outlines 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)	Peter Matthew – Housing & Communities (interim)
Officer Contact	<p>Brian Byrne Service Manager – Community Safety & Support 023 8028 5089 brian.byrne@nfdc.gov.uk</p>

Introduction and background

1. This report outlines the findings of the public consultation undertaken following Cabinet's decision on 2 April 2025 to commence the consultation process for the NFDC Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025–2028.
2. The report to Cabinet in April 2025 can be found here [April Cabinet Report](#) from pages 55-79.

Public consultation response and analysis

3. The consultation period commenced on 14 July 2025 and concluded on 10 August 2025.
4. The survey was made available through the New Forest District Council website, promoted via social media channels, media releases including local press, shared with residents via email communications and promoted by partners of the New Forest Domestic Abuse Partnership.
5. The consultation was conducted using the online platform 'Go Vocal', which was hosted and analysed by NFDC officers. The outcomes of the consultation are detailed in Appendix 2 and summarised in paragraphs 6–12 below.
6. A total of 18 responses were received. Appendix 2 provides a breakdown of respondent demographics, with 33% identifying as victim-survivors of domestic abuse.
7. In response to 'In supporting victims-survivors of domestic abuse, do you agree with the councils' priorities as outlined on page 11 and 12 of the domestic abuse strategy?' 94% of respondents expressed their support.
8. In response to the question regarding priority one: awareness and early intervention, 17 out of 18 respondents indicated agreement with the commitments outlined in the strategy.
9. With regard to priority two: workforce development, all respondents (100%) expressed full support for the commitments outlined in the strategy.
10. In response to priority three: high quality service provision 94% supported the commitments outlined within the strategy.
11. When considering priority four: multi-agency working and pathway development, 16 out of 18 respondents agreed with the proposed

commitments. Key themes emerging from the feedback included calls for improved coordination, greater involvement of survivors in governance, and enhanced long-term support for victims.

Corporate plan priorities

12. 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

13. The Domestic Abuse Strategy has been considered and it is deemed appropriate and proportionate for NFDC to publish these documents as best practice.
14. 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

15. The New Forest Domestic Abuse Forum is convened by NFDC and chaired by the Community Safety Manager (safeguarding lead officer and deputy single point of contact for domestic abuse).
16. 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.
17. 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.
18. The Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel supported the recommendations and the approval of the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028.

19. 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).

Financial and resource implications

20. 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.
21. 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 for NFDC.
22. Hampshire County Council provided a Whole Housing Approach (WHA) Grant of £53,364 and working with Stop Domestic Abuse the council appointed a 2-year co-located specialist post to ensure that victim-survivors of domestic abuse can access appropriate support.

Legal implications

23. The implementation of the Domestic Abuse Strategy and recent Housing Landlord Domestic Abuse Policy outline the council's commitment to meeting its obligations of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Risk assessment

24. The work of officers is risk assessed in line with health and safety and lone working procedures.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

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

Equalities implications

26. The proposed strategy improves 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

27. The objectives of the Domestic Abuse Strategy are to support and protect victims-survivors of domestic abuse from the harm of domestic abuse.
28. 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

29. 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

30. 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.
31. The new approach to ensuring the housing service positively contributes to housing neighbourhoods may involve increased partnership working with the National Park Authority.

Conclusion

32. 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.
33. It is recommended following the public consultation that the NFDC Domestic Abuse Strategy is adopted and implemented.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – NFDC Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028

Appendix 2 – Public consultation result summary

Background Papers:

None