



**Babergh &
Mid Suffolk**
District Councils

JOINT DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

**BABERGH AND MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT
COUNCIL 2025 - 2028**

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1. Purpose and Scope

- 1.1 This policy sets out the commitment of BABERGH AND MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCILS to prevent, reduce and respond to domestic abuse in the districts. It outlines what we mean by domestic abuse and describes how we will support our residents. It sets out guiding principles for our Officers who may witness and be informed of domestic abuse.
- 1.2 This policy ensures that preventing, reducing and responding to domestic abuse is embedded across all our services and is consistently applied when working with partner agencies.
- 1.3 The council has a zero-tolerance approach to violence and abuse and will take appropriate tenancy and legal action to remove a perpetrator from the home. We believe that everyone has a right to live in a safe environment and anyone disclosing domestic abuse can raise this, knowing they will be listened to, supported and not judged at any point throughout the process.
- 1.4 Statistics show that domestic abuse affects 1 in 4 women (1 in 3 in Suffolk), 1 in 6 men, and disproportionately higher rates among LGBTQ+ people, including trans and non-binary individuals, but it is likely that there are many more hidden cases. Research consistently shows that trans and non-binary people face elevated risk due to additional barriers to disclosure, including fear of not being believed, lack of specialist provision, and the compounding effect of other protected characteristics. Anyone experiencing domestic abuse has the right to be treated with dignity and respect and will be believed.

2. Our Responsibilities

- 2.1 We will ensure all our residents and customers including housing tenants affected by domestic abuse are signposted to local support services to access essential support and guidance and feel listened to and supported by our staff when disclosing and discussing domestic abuse.
- 2.2 All employees have a duty to act upon and report actual, suspected or allegations of abuse that they come across in their role. We recognise that staff who spend more time in our homes such as repairs staff, contractors and cleaners will see more of our customers and have a significant role in reporting concerns. The council also has trained Domestic Abuse Champions across many departments, including a trained Chief Executive, to provide further support.
- 2.3 We work in partnership with other agencies and will use all available tools and powers to address domestic abuse. The housing and communities' teams along with our community safety partners are committed to working

together to build safer and stronger communities. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires us to collaborate with the Police and other agencies to develop and implement strategies to raise awareness of domestic abuse, encourage the reporting of it and reduce crime and disorder.

3. Definition of Domestic Abuse

3.1 We adopt the Home Office definition of domestic violence which defines domestic abuse as:

3.2 'Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality'.

3.3 This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- **Psychological**
- **Physical**
- **Sexual**
- **Financial**
- **Emotional**
- **Digital**
- **Discriminatory**
- **Harassment/Stalking**

3.4 Controlling behaviour is: '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'.

3.5 Coercive behaviour is: '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'. This definition includes so called 'honour' based violence, genital mutilation and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to any one gender or ethnic group/ Please note arranged marriage is different from forced marriage as the couple gives consent and so is not a form of abuse.

3.6 In this policy where a victim is mentioned, we are referring to an individual who is experiencing domestic abuse, and mentions of survivor refer to an individual who has experienced domestic abuse.



4. Important Principles

- We recognise that any person of any gender can be victims of domestic abuse.
- We recognise that trans and non-binary people experience domestic abuse at disproportionately high rates and may face specific barriers to accessing support, including stigma, gaps in specialist provision, and reluctance to engage with services. We are committed to providing an inclusive, non-judgmental response irrespective of age, gender, gender identity and expression, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, religion, social background or any other protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.
- We recognise that children who witness or are exposed to domestic abuse are victims in their own right under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The impact of domestic abuse on children can be significant and long-lasting, affecting their safety, development and wellbeing. We will ensure that the needs of children are actively considered as part of any safeguarding or housing response, and that referrals to children's services are made promptly where risk is identified.
- We will recognise the difference between ASB and domestic abuse.

- We will work in partnership with other agencies to signpost tenants to appropriate support and respond to reports we receive.
- We will use our professional curiosity to identify domestic abuse and be open with our customers that we do so in a safe and appropriate way.
- We will provide a sensitive and confidential response to anyone approaching us for assistance in cases of domestic abuse or Violence against women and girls (VAWG).
- While women and girls are disproportionately affected by all forms of VAWG, and some are gender specific such as FGM, we will support those individuals experiencing VAWG or domestic abuse irrespective of age, gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, religion, social background or any other protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act.
- We will report incidents to the police on behalf of individuals or support them in doing so (with their permission), where they feel too intimidated to report incidents themselves. In high-risk cases, we have a duty to refer directly to the Police and other agencies, without consent.
- We will monitor routine repairs and rent arrears data which may be an indicator of domestic abuse and follow up with customers using our professional curiosity.
- We will continue to train staff across the business to act as Domestic Abuse Champions and identify continuous training opportunities.
- We will monitor data we have on reports of domestic abuse to ensure our service is accessible to anyone who needs it.
- We will consider and fund works to keep the victim/family safe. This may include target hardening such as lock changes or panic alarms.
- We will support residents through direct intervention and signposting to specialist agencies, including for legal measures such as non-molestation orders.
- The Domestic Abuse Link Worker will attend all MARAC meetings on behalf of BMSDC, ensuring high-risk cases are managed safely and effectively.
- We will follow guidance from the VAWG Strategy.

5. Legislation

5.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Family Law Act 1996
- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Data Protection Act 1998
- The Housing Act 1996
- The Equality Act 2010

- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Clare’s Law, also known as Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)

6. Related Documents

6.1 This policy can be read in conjunction with the Councils internal policies and documents:

- Babergh District Council Tenancy Agreement
[Our tenancy agreement - Babergh District Council - babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk](http://babergh.gov.uk/midsuffolk.gov.uk)
- Mid Suffolk District Council Tenancy Agreement
[Our tenancy agreement - Mid Suffolk District Council - babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk](http://babergh.gov.uk/midsuffolk.gov.uk)
- Babergh and Mid Suffolk Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
[bmsdc-asb-policy-2025](#)
- Tenancy Policy
[Microsoft Word - Appendix A - BMSDC Tenancy Policy 2023](#)

7. Equality, diversity and inclusion

7.1 We are committed to promoting equality within the delivery of our services to ensure all residents are treated with respect, dignity, fairness and above all not discriminated against. The Equality Act 2010 provides a framework to ensure Council services are not provided in a discriminatory manner.

7.2 We will make sure this policy is applied fairly and consistently to all our residents and will not directly or indirectly discriminate against any person or group of people. We will act sensitively towards the needs of individuals and communities, and we will take positive action to reduce victimisation, discrimination and harassment.

7.3 We will provide additional support to vulnerable customers affected by domestic abuse, whether they are the victim, witness or perpetrator by working with them to identify their support needs, how best to meet those needs and agreeing an action plan.

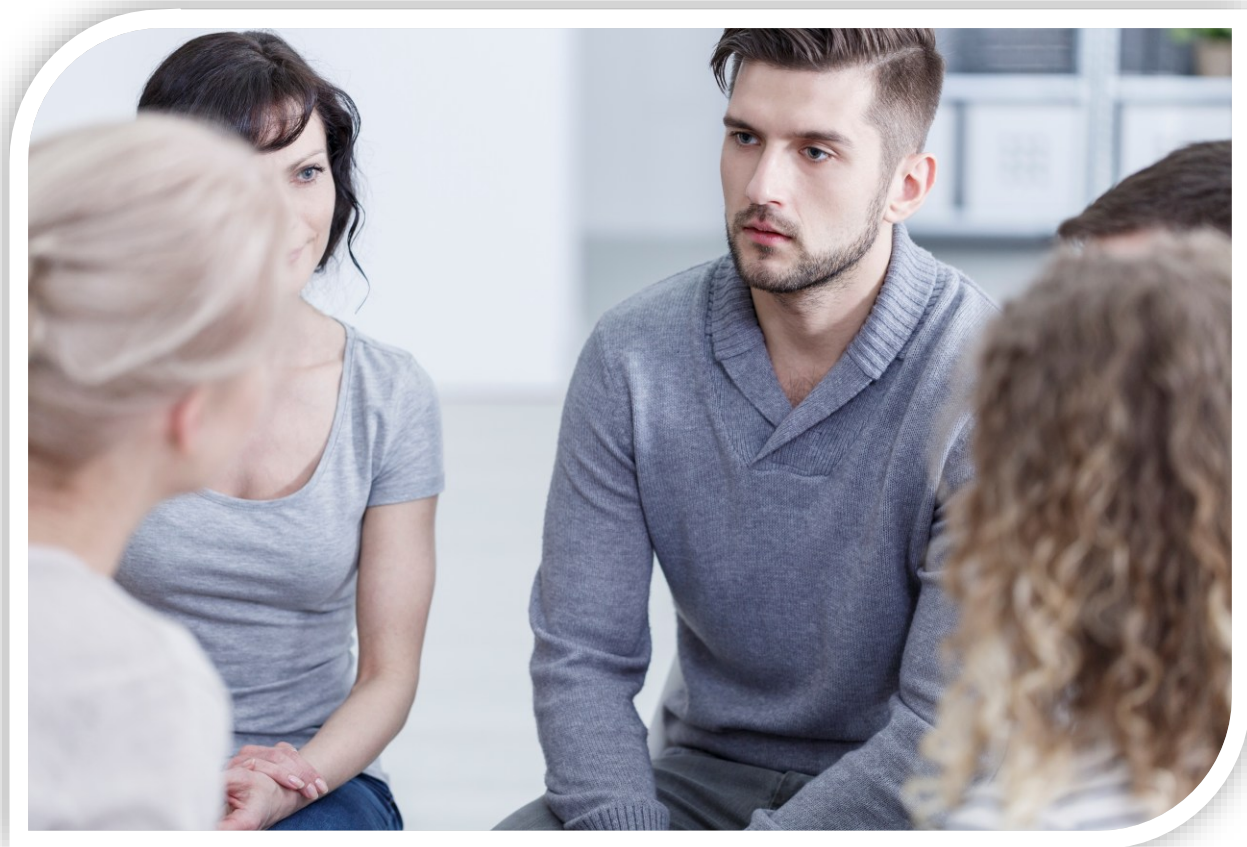
8. Confidentiality

8.1 Confidentiality and safety are of the utmost importance, however if a safeguarding issue is identified during a domestic abuse disclosure, then the [Council’s safeguarding policy](#) must be followed. Staff are required to contact social services if a child or vulnerable adult may be at risk.

- 8.2 Customer information will be processed in accordance with the law and BABERGH AND MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCILS privacy statement.

9. Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

- 9.1 We are committed to continually reviewing the service we provide so that we can identify and share best practice and make necessary service improvements.
- 9.2 This policy will be implemented through our domestic abuse procedures and other associated policies and procedures.
- 9.3 We may identify safeguarding concerns during the course of an investigation. We will manage these in line with our safeguarding policies and procedures.
- 9.4 The dedicated Domestic Abuse (DA) resource within the Housing Solutions Team helps monitor and improve our DA services. Key information is recorded, including number of cases allocated, household composition, demographics and outcomes such as rehousing, target hardening measures implemented, or support completed.
- 9.5 The DA Link Worker and their manager will review complex cases, share learning, and identify potential trends. This information is shared with the Tenancy Management Team to support a consistent and effective response to domestic abuse.



10. Training

- 10.1 We will ensure that relevant employees receive training in the law and practice relating to domestic abuse. Employees responsible for providing services in line with this policy will also receive training and regular updates on areas such as inclusion and diversity, unconscious bias and mental health as well as regular updates on local and national support agencies to enable effective signposting. Other employees will receive a briefing to

advise of this policy and to raise awareness of domestic abuse and have further guidance and support available on the staff intranet.

11. Complaints

- 11.1 We are committed to providing high quality services and support for all our customers and residents. We value all feedback as it allows us to make improvements to our services.
- 11.2 The Council has a complaints policy which should be the first point of call for people that are dissatisfied with the service they receive. More information about the Council's complaints procedure can be found on the Council's complaints webpage [here](#).

12. Policy Review

- 12.1 We will undertake periodic reviews of this domestic abuse policy and update or amend as appropriate. This will include taking account of feedback, working with service users and any legislative changes. We aim to undertake a full review of this policy every 5 years.

13. Document control sheet

- 13.1 This guidance will be reviewed as required.

Version	Notes	Date
1	First written	July 2025
2	Second version with minor changes throughout	August 2025
3	Final draft	November 2025
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Appendix 1.

Support Services

Suffolk Domestic Abuse Helpline

Operates 24/7

0800 977 5690

www.suffolkdahelpline.org.uk

Restore

Cover Bury, Stowmarket, Haverhill & Newmarket

0330 551 9495

www.restore-wa.org.uk

Compassion

Cover Sudbury & Stowmarket

www.compass-ion.org

Leeway

Cover Norfolk & Suffolk

Don't take self-referrals but helpline can be used. Referrals are received by the police.

0300 561 0077

www.leewaysupport.org

Norfolk & Suffolk Victim Care

Offer support to victims and those affected who have not experienced domestic abuse directly.

Cover Norfolk & Suffolk

0300 303 3706

www.nsvictimcare.org

Lighthouse Women's Aid

Based in Ipswich Suffolk providing support and advice to women and young people experiencing domestic abuse in their personal or family relationships.

01473 228270

www.lighthousewa.org.uk

Mankind

Advice and support for men experiencing domestic abuse

01823 334244

www.mankind.org.uk

Respect

Support for Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse

0808 802 4040

www.respect.org.uk

National Centre for Domestic Violence

Advice for applying for an emergency court injunction

0800 970 2070

www.ncdv.org.uk

PHOEBE

Support counselling services to black and ethnic minority women and children

01473 760966

info@phoebecentre.org.uk

Anglia Care Trust

Support, assistance and challenge to young people and families

01473 622888

www.angliacaretrust.org.uk