

# STRONGER together



Lewes District Council



Working in partnership with Eastbourne Homes

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<b>Accountable (Operational Lead):</b>	Liz Martin - Neighbourhood Housing Lead
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# Domestic Abuse Statement 2023-24

## Introduction

This statement sets out Eastbourne Borough Council's and Lewes District Council's (referred to as the council from herein) stand on all potential domestic abuse risks related to its business and to put in place steps aimed at ensuring that we are improving our knowledge and response to domestic abuse to ensure the best possible outcomes for victims/survivors. This statement relates to actions and activities during the financial year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

As part of the public sector, the council recognises it has a responsibility to take a robust approach to domestic abuse.

The Council believe in the right for everyone to live safely without fear, abuse, coercion, harassment, or violence. Domestic abuse is a horrific crime, a crime that destroys the lives of those effected and must stop, with the perpetrators held to account.

1 in 5 adults experience Domestic Abuse during their lifetime. This equates to 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6-7 men and on average two women are killed by their partner or ex-partner every week in England and Wales and 75% of these deaths take place inside the person's home. Anyone can experience incidents of domestic abuse however women are considerably more likely to experience repeated and severe forms of abuse, including sexual violence.

We will fully support those who use our services, and our staff will continue to work in collaboration with partner agencies and all those who contribute to the coordinated community response to domestic abuse.

Our work in achieving and retaining the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation highlights our commitment. The accreditation enables us to embed best practice around domestic abuse and creates a framework of support for those victims/survivors of domestic abuse who engage with our services.

## Our organisation:

The council is a local authority providing a wide range of local government services including council tax, housing benefits, homelessness, planning applications, bins and recycling, parking permits and car parks and seafront services. These services are delivered both directly and through external contractors, with a large and diverse supply chain.

## **We are committed to promoting and supporting environments which:**

- ensure that all our customers/residents feel welcomed, respected, and safe from abuse.
- be accessible and responsive to victims/survivors of domestic abuse.
- support and empower all those affected by domestic abuse.
- raise awareness of the impacts of domestic abuse.
- recognises equality amongst people and within relationships.
- enables and encourage concerns to be raised.
- respond appropriately and consistently to concerns using a victim-centred and trauma informed approach.

## **We recognise, in line with the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#), that:**

- all forms of domestic abuse cause damage to the victim/survivor and express an imbalance of power in the relationship.
- all victims/survivors (regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity) have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.
- domestic abuse can occur in all communities.
- domestic abuse may be a single incident, but is usually a systematic, repeated pattern which escalates in severity and frequency.
- recognise that individuals can be victims of multiple and different abusive behaviours and that personal and situational characteristics are interacting and overlapping, potentially creating additional barriers to access and support.
- domestic abuse, if witnessed or overheard by a child, is a form of abuse.
- working in partnership with children, adults and other agencies is essential in promoting the welfare of any child or adult suffering abuse.

## **The Council will:**

### **Raise Awareness:**

- staff know how to identify abuse and understand the impact this has on all aspects of people's wellbeing.
- provide relevant domestic abuse training for all staff.
- continue to take part in local, national, and global awareness events.
- promote the work around the subject of domestic abuse internally and externally.

## **Employ Best Practice in our Service Delivery:**

- good practice is shared across the organisation.
- victims/survivors of domestic abuse are safeguarded through effective service delivery and/or multiagency working.
- our policies and procedures clearly reflect our partnership working and encourage signposting to relevant support services both locally and nationally.
- our services are reviewed to reflect case law and relevant changes in legislation.
- we will continue to embed best practice informed by DAHA and other partner agencies.

## **Set Clear Policies and Guidance:**

- domestic abuse is appropriately referenced in our organisational strategies, policies, and procedures.
- domestic abuse related policies have clear guidance for our staff working with victims/survivors of domestic abuse.
- our approach is always victim focused and trauma informed.
- clearly outlined steps staff need to take if domestic abuse is reported by customers accessing our services or disclosed by members of staff.

## **Our Policies:**

The council has developed policies and processes which reflect the commitment to acting ethically and with integrity to offer support to those who have experienced domestic abuse, whether that be our customers or members of our staff.

- **Homes First Domestic Abuse Policy**

Our Homes First Domestic Abuse Policy outlines the support available to our tenants and leaseholders as well as those who may have fled their homes because of domestic abuse and are accessing homelessness support from our Housing Options and Wellbeing team. It creates a robust framework of expected support, and it has been developed with the consultation of our residents and partners in the community to ensure that the council remains a part of the coordinated community response to domestic abuse.

- **Staff Domestic Abuse Policy**

The council recognises that our staff may be victims/survivors of domestic abuse themselves and by creating a domestic abuse policy for our staff we are ensuring

that our staff community can be assured of care and support from the council should they be experiencing domestic abuse in their own lives.

The council's **Employee Code of Conduct** also makes clear to employees the actions and behaviours expected of them when representing the council. The council strives to maintain the highest standards of employee conduct and ethical behaviour and breaches are investigated.

Our work to support those experiencing domestic abuse also aligns with our existing policies including:

- **Equality & Diversity Policy**

The council is committed to making equality and diversity an integral part of the business as usual. This includes a commitment to use our influence and purchasing power to help make equality a reality for all, and to take action to eradicate discrimination and inequality when delivering services, when empowering others to deliver services on our behalf and when providing funding to others to provide services. We are committed to understanding and appreciating intersectional experiences of domestic abuse and recognising how we can support victim/survivors in different ways based on their protected characteristics.

- **Safeguarding Policy**

The council actively works to ensure the safeguarding of all vulnerable people. As part of its safeguarding responsibility, the council regularly undertakes safeguarding training for colleagues across the authority, to help identify any signs of potential safeguarding incidents and the relevant referral pathways. We would expect any colleague who may witness or suspect any wrongdoing to report their concerns to the council's Nominated Senior Officer or Safeguarding Contacts or police and/or East Sussex Children's' and Adults' Services.

## **Approval**

This document constitutes Eastbourne Borough Council and Lewes District Council's domestic abuse statement.