

ANGUS COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 29 SEPTEMBER 2020

HOUSING DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITIES

ABSTRACT

This report seeks approval for the implementation of the Housing Division's proposed Domestic Abuse Policy.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) approves the Housing Division's Domestic Abuse Policy in **Appendix A**.
- (ii) notes the consultation which has been undertaken with stakeholders and communities in preparing the Domestic Abuse Policy as detailed in **Appendix B**.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS LOCAL OUTCOMES IMPROVEMENT PLAN/CORPORATE PLAN

2.1 This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within Angus Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2017-2030:

- Safe, secure, vibrant and sustainable communities
- The best start in life for children
- Improved physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing
- A skilled and adaptable workforce.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Angus Council's housing division made a commitment as part of the Chartered Institute of Housing's (CIH) Make a Stand campaign to implement a domestic abuse policy. The policy was drafted based on the recommendations from research completed by Women's Aid, the CIH Domestic Abuse Guidance for Social Landlords and following discussions with key stakeholders.

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 It is fairly standard practice that if someone is fleeing domestic abuse, they are encouraged to present as homeless. Presenting as homeless can be traumatic, which means that many women experiencing domestic abuse chose to stay in an abusive relationship or put themselves in a position of uncertainty and potential separation from their existing support networks in order to leave the perpetrator.

4.2 Over the last five years, an average of 112 homeless applications have been made each year from people stating that they were fleeing violence from a partner. This is out of a total of an average 734 homeless presentations. This means that on average, 15% of all homeless applications are as a result of people fleeing violence from a partner. It is acknowledged that many people do not cite domestic abuse as a reason for presenting as homeless (sometimes citing relationship breakdown or other issues), and it is thought that the number of people effectively homeless due to domestic abuse is higher.

5. PROPOSALS

- 5.1 This policy supports the aims set out in the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan by focusing on preventing homelessness wherever possible and maximising other opportunities for women experiencing domestic abuse to access settled accommodation. It sets out how the Housing Division will provide a proactive housing response to preventing and addressing domestic abuse by:
- Providing a confidential, sensitive and supportive response to victims/survivors, whether that be women, children or men
 - Working collaboratively across the organisation and with partners to provide a coordinated response to enable victims/survivors to access a range of housing options, advice, information and support;
 - Holding perpetrators to account – domestic abuse is the responsibility of the perpetrator and action will be taken, where possible, to support victims/survivors to remain in the family home.
- 5.2 To support the implementation of this policy we will ensure that domestic abuse training is mandatory for all staff who come into contact with tenants or applicants. Guidance is also being developed which will support the delivery of the policy and we will conduct case reviews with Angus Violence Against Women partners to evaluate the effectiveness of the policy, highlight developing practice, examples of effective partnership working and any gaps in service provision.
- 5.3 We recognise that domestic abuse has a significant and disproportionate impact on women, so the policy takes a gendered approach to domestic abuse, consistent with national policy and guidance. However, Angus Council's Housing Division takes all forms of abuse very seriously and is committed to providing a sensitive and confidential response to anyone approaching the service for assistance in cases of domestic abuse. It is important to acknowledge that men can also be victims, and domestic abuse can occur in all relationships, including those of same sex.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Any financial implications arising from the implementation of this policy will be met by existing resources.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Consultation which has been undertaken with stakeholders and communities in preparing the Housing Domestic Abuse Policy. The experiences of women and stakeholders will continue to be used to evaluate the implementation of this policy to ensure it meets its objectives and is consistently applied.

NOTE: No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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List of Appendices:

- Appendix A – Housing Division Domestic Abuse Policy
- Appendix B – Consultation Report
- Appendix C – Equalities Impact Assessment