

Housing, Health and Communities Committee	
Meeting Date	25 th February 2026
Report Title	Swale Domestic Abuse Policy refresh 2026
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing and Communities
Lead Officer	Tina Grafton Safeguarding Team Lead / ASB Officer
Classification	Open
Recommendations	For Housing & Health and Communities Committee to review and adopt this revised domestic abuse policy.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Domestic Abuse Policy was brought into place in 2023 and due to be reviewed three yearly ready for publication in March 2026.
- 1.2 This report contains updates made to the policy in legislation and minor changes due to best practice in domestic abuse work.

2 Background, Context and Proposals

- 2.1 Swale Borough Council, through both its safeguarding and community safety duties have been supporting domestic abuse victims / survivors for many years, linking in with both statutory and voluntary sector partners to improve partnership work and its response to victims. Since the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (amendments in 2024), a domestic abuse officer has been in post to review compliance to this Act and support wider partnership work with the aim of improving responses to victims / survivors and their families. Within this work we now also aim to hold perpetrators to account where possible through programmes of work available to us.
- 2.2 The policy has been reviewed in line with legislative changes and best practice from what was formerly known as Domestic Homicide reviews and more recently renamed as Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews (DARDR).
- 2.3 The policy is intertwined with our accreditation status of a Gold Award with Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA), this ensures we work within the best practice guidelines that this process provides.
- 2.4 Reviewing and adopting this policy would mean that we are meeting our statutory requirements.

2.5 This policy update would ensure we cannot be challenged on our practices by KMSAB (Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adult Board) whilst undertaking annual audits for out-of-date policies.

2.6 Changes to the current sections within policy include:

- Language change within policy from victim and referring to them as survivors once settled and supported as survivors.
- Legislation change to reflect 2024 amendments to DA Act 3.1.
- Narrative changed to be more inclusive 3.3.
- Additional text added regarding Kent stats 4.2.
- Legal duties expanded upon 5.1
- Emphasised to reflect all High Risk or complex cases being flagged to safeguarding team 7.2.2
- Risk based safety led comment added 7.3.1
- Tailored Response - word **must** added to ensure personal characteristics are considered and taken into account to ensure relevant by and for services are identified 7.5.1.
- Reference to DARDR (Domestic Abuse Related Death Review) added opposed to previous process known as DHR (Domestic Homicide Review) 10.4

3 Recommendations

3.1 For Housing, Health and Communities Committee to approve this refreshed Domestic Abuse Policy.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

4.1 Not adopting this policy refresh would not be in keeping with the work of Swale Borough Council ensuring that we remain in date with current legislative changes.

4.2 The policy not being updated would result in our Gold Award with DAHA being withdrawn.

4.3 Furthermore, not reviewing and adopting this policy would mean that we are not meeting our statutory requirements.

- 4.4 By not adopting this revised policy would result in challenges of our practices by KMSAB during audits (Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adult Board).

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 We have consulted with specialist trained Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) within our own teams and wider housing teams who are predominant users of this policy although this is relevant to all staff, volunteers, and Members. The IDVA is a team member within the housing team who has extensive experience and qualifications in the domestic abuse arena along with legal training/qualifications.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	This Policy supports the Corporate Plan priority 'tackling deprivation and creating equal opportunities for everyone' and the objective of 'ensuring that the council plays a proactive role in reducing crime and ASB, including through the modernisation of CCTV provision.'
Financial, Resource and Property	There are no additional finance, resource, or property implications in implementing this refreshed policy. Funding is already committed to the county commissioned domestic abuse service from existing community safety core budget. Further grant funding is provided on an ad hoc basis towards perpetrator services or other required local services through core community safety budget or the grant received from the Police and Crime Commissioner.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	The Council are required to comply with a variety of legislation in relation to Domestic Abuse including the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and amendments 2024, Care Act 2014, Children's Act 1989 and the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. This policy does not introduce any additional activity to meet the requirements of this legislation but consolidates existing action into one place.
Crime and Disorder	The policy details the main aim of the Domestic Abuse Policy which is to increase the safety of those residents within the Borough that are affected by domestic abuse.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	No environment and sustainability implications have been identified at this stage.
Health and Wellbeing	This policy consolidates existing activity under both the community safety and safeguarding agendas into on place, all of which seek

	to increase the health and wellbeing of those affected by domestic abuse.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	The revised policy bolster's the existing Safeguarding Policy for the Council, ensuring appropriate responses are in place for those affected by domestic abuse. This includes both the victim and household members which encompasses children. We also have a staff DA policy which is due to be reviewed and refreshed later in 2026.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	No specific implications on risk management or health/safety have been identified at this stage.
Equality and Diversity	No specific implications on groups with protected characteristics have been identified.
Privacy and Data Protection	The revision of this policy does not identify any new privacy or data protection concerns. Any data gathered or shared will continue to be done so in line with existing community safety/safeguarding mechanisms.
Local Government Reorganisation	No current issues have been identified at this time but when moving towards unitary set up this policy and associated procedures would need to be reviewed.

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Domestic Abuse Policy

8 Background Papers

No background Papers required to be provided