BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL **DECISION NO. 1896 _____**

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER

This form **MUST** be used to record any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Executive Member (Portfolio Holder).

The form must be completed and passed to the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 working days have passed and the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

1. Description of decision

(1) That the proposed Domestic Abuse for Housing Policy, as detailed in Appendix A to the report prepared to accompany this decision, be approved for adoption to effectively support domestic abuse matters in housing issues that may occur in the Borough.

(2) That delegated authority be given to the Interim Strategic Director for Environment to implement the revised policy, making any minor textual or administrative amends to the policy as appropriate.

2. Date of decision

30 October 2026

3. Reasons for decision

Publication and implementation of the Domestic Abuse Policy for Housing supports a Council wide commitment to addressing and reducing domestic abuse.

4. Alternatives considered and rejected

To continue without a standalone, dedicated domestic abuse policy for housing was considered and rejected as it is recommended in the government code of guidance for homelessness and is deemed best practice.

5. How decision is to be funded

Publication of the proposed policy can be delivered within existing resources, with the implementation of the proposed policy not requiring additional resource or financial implications as a result.

6. Conflicts of interest

Name of all Executive members who were consulted AND declared a conflict of interest.	Nature of interest	Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and date of dispensation)	Did the Chief Executive give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and the date of the dispensation).

The Mayor has been consulted on this decision

30 October 2026

Tom Wotton

Signed: Andrea Spice ..... Date: **30 October 2026**

Name of Decision Taker: **Cllr. Andrea Spice**
Portfolio Holder for Economic Prosperity, Planning, Housing & Regulatory Services

This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services as soon as it is completed.

Date decision published: 30 October 2026.....

Date decision can be implemented if not called in: 10 November 2026.....

(Decision to be made exempt from call in.....NO.....)

For publication

Bedford Borough Council – Portfolio Holder for Economic Prosperity, Planning, Housing & Regulatory Services

Date of Meeting: 30 October 2026

Report by: Head of Housing, Homelessness and Customer Services Anna Richardson

Subject: DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY FOR HOUSING

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report presents a proposed "Domestic Abuse Policy for Housing" (Appendix A). It has been developed in collaboration with key stakeholders including the Local Homelessness Partnership group members, a domestic abuse lived experience panel and the Housing Committee.

1.2 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 set out the intent to develop and publish a stand-alone Domestic Abuse and Housing Policy to support Council wide commitment to addressing and reducing domestic abuse. This is part of a wider project to seek DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Allowance) accreditation demonstrating best practice in the field.

1.3 This policy supplements and is aligned to the following:

- Bedford Borough Council Corporate Plan
- Domestic Abuse Strategy 2026 – 2031
- Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the Portfolio Holder considers the contents of this report and appendices, and if satisfied, to:

(1) Approve the adoption and publication of the proposed Domestic Abuse Policy for Housing, reproduced at Appendix A, to support delivery of the Council's duties to effectively support domestic abuse matters in housing issues that may occur in the Borough.

(2) Delegates authority to the Interim Strategic Director for Environment to implement the revised policy, making any minor textual or administrative amendments to the policy as appropriate.

3. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Publication and implementation of the Domestic Abuse Policy for Housing supports a Council wide commitment to addressing and reducing domestic abuse.

4. THE CURRENT POSITION

4.1 Whilst there are corporate wide strategies that set out the Council's commitment to support customers experiencing domestic abuse, there is a need for a dedicated Housing focused policy to ensure that such cases are given appropriate priority and handled effectively to protect victims, survivors and their families.

4.2 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 secured that those who are homeless because of domestic abuse have an automatic priority need for homelessness assistance under the Housing Act 1996. This means that housing services must ensure that housing provision is made for eligible homeless victims / survivors of domestic abuse including temporary accommodation.

4.3 Demand for specialist services remains high requiring a robust response to keep people safe and protect victims / survivors and their children. The national published government data for homelessness (Jan to Mar 2026) found that nationally 2,930 cases became homeless as a direct result of domestic abuse. However, of all households experiencing homelessness where the primary cause is recorded for a wide range of reasons, 11,300 households had experienced domestic abuse which represents appx 13% of all households owed a homeless duty in that quarter. For the East of England, there were 1,240 households owed a homeless duty having had a domestic abuse experience (14%).

4.4 The housing service team have received training and support in handling domestic abuse cases recognising the sensitivity and complexity of such cases. Further training is scheduled for the Autumn in trauma informed practice and more in-depth specialism on domestic abuse.

4.5 To support customers there is an independent domestic violence adviser co-located at the customer service Hub on Horne Lane. There is also a specialist housing and domestic abuse lead caseworker that has been employed to lead on best practice and support staff with more complex cases.

5. DETAILS

5.1 In scope, the new policy is for victims / survivors of domestic abuse that need housing support and for housing staff.

5.2 The policy upholds that Bedford Borough Council believes that Domestic Abuse is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Our aim is to take all reports seriously to ensure people are safe and will treat victims / survivors with respect and dignity, empowering them to make decisions and where possible and safe to do so, holding perpetrators to account.

5.3 A pledge is included in the policy setting out core principles for the way we work. See below:



Definitions of domestic abuse are covered at section 2 of the policy with guidance given. Alongside physical or violent behaviour, the definition includes a range of other forms of domestic abuse such as controlling or coercive behaviour and 'honour' based abuse.

5.4 Most importantly, the policy covers for our customers detail on how to contact us for help and what they can expect in terms of process and help available once they call through to the department. This includes an outline of relevant legal and social housing policy matters.

5.5 At times there is a need for collaboration with key partners (subject to data protection limitations) to ensure the safety of victims / survivors. The policy explains the coordinated community response and the key service partners involved.

5.6 This new policy for domestic abuse and housing aligns to the National Plan to end Homelessness and our local Housing and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2029.

6. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

6.1 To continue without a standalone, dedicated domestic abuse policy for housing was considered and rejected as it is recommended in the government code of guidance for homelessness and is deemed best practice.

7. KEY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Legal Issues – relevant legal power

Victims and survivors of domestic abuse that have a housing need are supported under part 7 the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The proposed policy is aligned to, and ensures full compliance with the legal framework as follows:

- The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 secured that those who are homeless because of domestic abuse have an automatic priority need for homelessness assistance.
- This Act also sets out the legal definition of Domestic Abuse which is applied in the policy.
- Under section 177 of the Housing Act, it is deemed not reasonable to continue to occupy accommodation if doing so is probable to lead to domestic abuse. The statutory code of guidance upholds a principle of 'No Blanket Evidence' requirements before accommodation may be offered and explicitly notes that enquiries must not alert a perpetrator or in any way compromise safety which must come first. This is reflected in the policy which treats such cases needing a move as an emergency for action on the same day and guidance for staff on enquiries.
- Part 6 of the Housing Act provides a legal framework for allocating social housing and determining reasonable preference for vulnerable groups such as victims / survivors of domestic abuse.

7.2 Policy Issues

This policy supplements and is aligned to the following:

- Bedford Borough Council Corporate Plan
- Domestic Abuse Strategy 2026 – 2031
- Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Part 6 of the Housing Act provides a legal framework for allocating social housing and determining reasonable preference for vulnerable groups such as victims / survivors of domestic abuse. This is reflected in our social housing allocations policy.

7.3 Resource Issues

No additional resources are required to implement this policy.

7.4 Risks

Delivering and implementing the dedicated domestic abuse policy for housing provides staff with clear guidance. It introduces processes and policy to embed the legislative principles effectively into practice. This reduces the risk of poor-quality casework and ensures that victims/survivors are protected and have access to safe housing. The policy also reduces the risk of legal challenge and complaint.

7.5 Environmental Implications

There are no environmental implications.

7.6 Equalities Impact

Please see attached the equality impact assessment at **Appendix B**.

The domestic abuse policy for housing meets our public sector equality duty set out in the Equalities Act 2010 to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

7.7 Impact on Families

The policy directly supports families with or without children that have experienced domestic abuse access services and safe housing.

7.8 Community Safety and Resilience

The policy prioritises customer safety through fast-track access to housing solutions for those that are victims / survivors of domestic abuse, reducing risk and adverse impact of such behaviour on households and the community. The policy also addresses the need to hold the perpetrator to account where possible aiming to reduce repeat offences.

7.9 Impact on Health and Wellbeing

Domestic abuse has a direct detrimental impact on a persons' mental health, physical health and safety and wellbeing. A robust policy that sets out how to support such individuals into safe housing supports their recovery and helps with health and wellbeing.

8. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS AND OUTCOME

8.1 The following Councillors, Council units, Officers and/or other organisations have been consulted in preparing this report:

- Portfolio Holder for Economic Prosperity, Planning, Housing & Regulatory Services
- Interim Strategic Director for Environment
- Team Manager Domestic Abuse Strategy
- Head of Legal
- Service Director for Finance
- Domestic Abuse Lived Experience Panel facilitated by children's services
- The Homeless Partnership (with a number of local third sector partners participating)
- Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance
- Housing Committee

8.2 Consultees have expressed support for the proposed policy, acknowledged the urgency of delivery, and suggested minor amends which have been captured throughout the consultation have been incorporated.

9. WARD COUNCILLOR VIEWS

9.1 Not applicable as the stagey and regulatory function is Borough wide as appropriate

10. CONTACTS AND REFERENCES

Report Contact Officer:	Anna Richardson, Head of Housing, Homelessness and Customer Services, anna.richardson@bedford.gov.uk
Declarations of Interest by the Report Author:	None
File Reference:	Domestic Abuse Policy for Housing 2026
Previous Relevant Minutes:	N/A
Background Papers:	N/A
Appendices:	Appendix A – Domestic Abuse Policy for Housing Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment

DOMESTIC ABUSE FOR HOUSING POLICY
BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

1. Introduction

BBC Policy Aims and Commitment

Bedford Borough Council believes that Domestic Abuse is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

We take all reports of domestic abuse seriously and our officers will always treat victims/survivors with respect and dignity and empower them to make informed decisions. We use a safety-led approach and will always work with the victim/survivor to make sure any actions taken improve their personal safety and housing security ensuring that outcomes are right the first time.

We believe perpetrators (those committing the abuse) are responsible for their own behaviour and that they should be held to account for the consequences of their actions.

Policy aims are captured in the Bedford Borough Housing and Domestic Abuse Pledge below.

Scope

This policy provides guidance for:

- Victim/survivors of Domestic abuse that need housing support from Bedford Borough council
- Housing staff who are supporting victim/survivors of Domestic Abuse eligible for housing assistance under the Housing Act 1996.
- Please note that appropriate signposting for assistance from partner organisations will be made available for those that are not eligible.

This policy links to other Bedford Borough Council polices and strategies as detailed in Appendix 1.

A range of legislation applies to this policy as detailed in appendix 2

Housing and Domestic Abuse Pledge

Bedford Borough Council pledges to:

1. Promote the housing help that is on offer to encourage you to come forward if you are a victim/survivor of domestic abuse.
2. Create a safe space to talk and a trained housing professional will listen to you with a non-judgemental and believing approach
3. Always prioritise safety for you and any children
4. Empower you to make decisions that are right for you
5. Explore suitable housing options with you.
6. Explain our processes and decisions clearly and in a timely manner
7. Work with partners and other organisations to connect you to additional support
8. Hold perpetrator to account wherever possible
9. Seek feedback on our services and take action to continually improve.
10. Provide mandatory domestic abuse training for staff

2. Defining Domestic Abuse

Domestic Abuse, as defined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021[1] includes (but is not limited to):

Abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:	Other forms of domestic violence and abuse:
• physical or sexual abuse • violent or threatening behaviour • controlling or coercive behaviour • economic abuse • psychological, emotional, or other abuse	• so called 'honour' based violence • female genital mutilation (FGM) • forced marriage • stalking and harassment • image-based abuse

Domestic abuse includes behaviour that consists of a single incident or part of an ongoing pattern of behaviour.

Personally connected is defined in the act as people who:

- Are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- Are due to be, are currently, or have been, married or civil partners to each other
- Are, or have been, parents of the same child or children
- Are relatives (the act gives further detail on this such as extended family or in-laws or parents to adult children)

See the DA Act Domestic Abuse Act 2021 for further detail on the statutory definition.

What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse is when someone you know or have a relationship with hurts, controls, or frightens you.
This can happen in different ways, not only physical harm.

It may include:

- **Physical abuse** – hitting, pushing, or damaging your belongings
- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual activity without your agreement
- **Emotional abuse** – making you feel scared, isolated, or not good enough
- **Controlling behaviour** – stopping you from seeing people, making your own choices, or living your life freely

[1] Domestic Abuse Act 2021

- **Money (economic) abuse** – controlling your money, work, or access to basic needs like food or transport
- **Stalking or harassment** – repeated unwanted contact that makes you feel unsafe, including through phones or online
- **'Honour'-based abuse** – abuse linked to family or community expectations
- **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** – a serious form of harm and against the law

Understanding Coercive Control

Coercive control is a common and serious form of abuse and it is a crime
It is when someone repeatedly acts in a way that makes you feel controlled, dependent, isolated, or afraid.

This can include:

- Stopping you from seeing friends or family
- Controlling your money or daily activities
- Watching where you go or who you speak to
- Putting you down or making you feel worthless
- Threatening to harm you, your children, or themselves
- Damaging your belongings
- Pressuring or forcing you to do things you do not want to do
- Trying to control your thoughts or decisions in an unfair way.
- Lying, twisting the truth, or make you feel guilty so that you do what they want.
- Makes you doubt your own thoughts, feelings, or memories.
- For example, they may say something did not happen when it did, or tell you that you are "overreacting" or "imagining things."
- Over time, this can make you feel confused, lose confidence, and feel like you cannot trust yourself

The Domestic Abuse Act

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places duties on Local Authorities and other Partner agencies to protect and support victims and survivors of Domestic Abuse.

It also recognises that children who witness Domestic Abuse are direct victims themselves, and services must be put in place to protect them.

Many forms of abuse are a crime, including:

- harassment
- assault
- criminal damage
- attempted murder
- rape or sexual assault
- false imprisonment
- threats to kill
- controlling and coercive behaviour
- image-based abuse non-fatal strangulation & suffocation

3. How to contact us for help

If you are in immediate danger police support should be requested by ringing 999.
In non-urgent situations, the police can be called by ringing 101.

If you are a victim/survivor of Domestic Abuse and need housing help please contact us for advice and support as soon as possible on:

01234 718058,

or in person at the

Bedford Borough Hub, **2 Horne Lane, Bedford, MK40 1RA**.

Our opening hours are:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday: 9am-5pm

Wednesday: 10am-5pm

In an emergency outside of these hours, please call **01234 267422.**

You also can report domestic abuse through interaction with any of our council services.

4. What to expect from us

A customer services officer will listen sensitively and with empathy as you tell us about your situation and the help that you need.

- We take all reports of domestic abuse seriously and handle any disclosures confidentially in a way that is non-judgmental and does not place you at greater risk. Please see appendix 4 for our data protection statement.
- We will keep consistent, accurate and relevant records. We will share these, with your permission, so that you do not have to keep repeating the details unnecessarily.
- We will not share any information without your consent, unless required to do so by law, or unless the information is necessary to protect a child or an adult at risk.

The customer service officer will arrange an appointment with a trained housing specialist in a private interview room to create a safe space to talk. You may be asked to bring documents such as ID or tenancy agreements to the appointment. However, if you cannot safely get hold of such documents this will not prevent you accessing our help.

Please let us know any reasonable adjustments you may need such as a:

- An Independent interpreter and/or translation service
- Wheelchair accessible space and documents, a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter.
- Housing Officer of a preferred gender.
- We will make every attempt to ensure diversity of needs are met.

We aim to book appointments within 5 days, but in cases of domestic abuse where an urgent move may be required for safety reasons, we will see you on the same day.

The initial appointment will be held with someone who has specialist training, using a trauma informed approach. In the housing appointment, our first priority is to ensure that your living arrangements are safe. This will consider your personal circumstances and level of risk. Our aim is to prevent your homelessness where possible. If you are homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse we will treat your case as priority need, as set out in section 189 of the 1996 Housing Act.

The housing officer may support you to:

- Remain in your current property where it is safe to do so to prevent your homelessness. This could include (but not limited to) improving security on

your house, advising about legal rights such as an occupation order, liaising with the police and specialist partners.

- Help you to secure or source alternative accommodation of your choice such as with friends or family if safe and suitable to meet your needs
- Provide you with suitable temporary accommodation. This may include either refuge, hotel or self-contained housing depending on availability and need.
- We will only use bed and breakfast or hotel accommodation for a short stay (no more than 3 nights) if there is no suitable alternative available.
- We will support you to access benefits to help with any costs.
- We aim to accommodate within the Borough where possible to keep close ties you may have (e.g. support networks, employment, schools for the children, or medical provision) unless unsafe to do so.

Your housing officer will have a conversation with you about your current situation and understand what is needed to keep you safe. This is a risk assessment using a checklist called DASH ('Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence Risk Assessment'). If a recent DASH (within the last two weeks) already exists, then consent will be sought to share this, rather than ask you to repeat the process. This assessment will help us prepare safety plans and advise you the options available.

- If the DASH risk assessment identifies your situation as high risk, a referral to MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) will be made and you will be offered an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA).
- Otherwise, with your consent, we will make a referral into local domestic abuse services to provide support.
- If there is a child, children or vulnerable adult living within the home where there is abuse, we have a legal duty to follow safeguarding procedures. Referrals into children's/adults services are made, as appropriate.

Please see Bedfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership website for a list of services.

During the initial appointment the housing officer will also have a conversation with you to explore longer term safe and settled housing options. Impartial advice will be given about

- Your tenancy rights,
- Affordability, benefits and grant eligibility.
- Support available for renting in the private sector
- Accessing social housing
- Any other relevant housing matters.

The officer will also make enquiries to establish any duties owed to you under the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. This

includes checking your eligibility for support. For more information see Shelter Legal England - Eligibility for homeless assistance - Shelter England

We will not contact your perpetrator or any family member that you identify as a risk, in the course of our enquiries.

Finally, the housing officer will create a Personal Housing Plan with you. This agreement will set out actions that we will take and actions that you will take to address your housing need.

After this initial appointment the housing officer will explain next steps and then keep in touch with you as regularly, typically fortnightly as a minimum. Your housing hfficer will agree with you the safest way and times to contact you.

5. Social housing and domestic abuse

Bedford Borough Council believes no one should have to experience or live in fear of domestic abuse in any form and your home should always be a safe space.

Bedford Borough Council operates in accordance with National Legislation (see appendix 2)

Our social housing allocations scheme[2] gives priority to domestic abuse victim/survivors. As such, Victim/Survivors are exempt from the local connection criteria on the Social Housing Allocations Scheme.

Bedford Borough Council will also open a statutory homeless case from anyone that has applied to join the housing register that is suffering Domestic abuse unless a customer chooses explicitly to opt out.

Bedford Borough council provides support and works in partnership with agencies to provide the safest and best options for housing for DA survivors. Our aim is where possible to avoid homelessness for families.

In emergency cases, our Allocations scheme (Bedford Borough Allocation Scheme 2026) states that:

- Applicants that have an immediate need for new accommodation due to an emergency or exceptional circumstance, such as needing to flee violence and would be in immediate and serious danger if they were to remain in their current accommodation, will be awarded the highest priority Band reflecting emergency needs.
- Each case (and any available supporting evidence pertaining to the risk) will be considered and determined on its individual facts and merits.

[2] Allocations Scheme April 2021

- Under this Band applicants will be given one offer of suitable accommodation in a location that is removed from the immediate risk.

6. Coordinated Community Response

Working in partnership is key to tackling domestic abuse.

Bedford Borough Council leads and chairs the Bedford Multi Agency Risk Assessment conference (MARAC) responding to and managing high-risk domestic abuse cases.

We closely with adults and children's services and other internal departments to provide holistic support.

We work in partnership with our local registered social and supported housing providers through formal protocols to ensure joint early intervention to help victim and survivors of domestic abuse.

We are committed to developing reciprocal arrangements with regional neighbouring councils.

We work proactively, and in partnership with other agencies. These include (but not limited to):

- The criminal justice system, including probation and the police.
- Education
- Local voluntary sector partners
- Local domestic abuse specialist services
- Health providers including substance misuse services
- Charitable partners working with migrants, refugees and those with 'No Recourse to Public Funds'
- Specialist accommodation and advice services for local minority groups

Bedford Borough Council works with our partners to raise awareness about domestic abuse via engagement activities, social media and providing training internally and externally.

7. Perpetrators of domestic abuse

Where possible we will seek justice for the victim/survivor and to hold the perpetrator to account. This can include referral to our local behaviour change programmes to reduce harm and prevent re-offending

Our main concern and duty are to the safety of the victim/survivor and that of their child/ children. For this reason, any action taken against the perpetrator will be firstly discussed and a with the victim/survivor to minimise any harm or consequence to their personal safety or housing security.

If the perpetrator has been identified and it is safe to do so we will report to the police or the community safety team. Their details will be recorded on our relevant case management systems.

8. Equalities

Bedford Borough Council holds a public Sector Equality duty under the Equalities Act 2010 for those with protected characteristics: as race, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion, gender reassignment, marital status and pregnancy. This policy has due regard to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations

We recognise that victims and survivors of domestic abuse may face overlapping forms of discrimination and disadvantage based on protected characteristics and/or other factors such as socio-economic status. This can compound their experiences of abuse and creates additional barriers to support.

We aim to ensure our services are inclusive and equitable and work in partnership with local specialist agencies to meet the intersecting needs of victim/survivors that we work with.

9. Glossary

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC): This is a group of highly skilled professionals representing the local police, health, child protection, housing practitioners, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs), probation and other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors. It is co-ordinated by the Police. An Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) presents the case on behalf of

the victim and the representatives work together to increasing the safety of the victim and create a co-ordinated action plan.

DASH risk assessment: The Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence (DASH) Risk Assessment has been used by the UK's Police Force since March 2009. This has been further developed and is now used by all professionals working with victims/survivors of domestic abuse. The risk assessment makes sure everyone asks the right questions and can accurately assess levels of risk. If the risk threshold is met, cases are then referred to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

IDVA- Independent Domestic Violence Advocate: An Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) is a specialist professional who supports victim / survivors of domestic abuse by providing safety planning, advocacy, and coordinated support across criminal justice and safeguarding systems.

BDAP- Bedfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership is a multi-agency collaboration that brings together local services and organisations to coordinate efforts in preventing domestic abuse, supporting survivors, and holding perpetrators accountable.

Appendix 1

Local policies and strategies

- Bedford Borough Council Corporate Plan Corporate Plan Report
- Domestic Abuse Strategy 2026-2031 Domestic abuse | Bedford Borough Council
- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029
- Joint local health and wellbeing Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Housing Strategy 2021-2026 download
- Staff Domestic Abuse Guidelines
- Safeguarding Children: Safeguarding Bedfordshire - Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership Reporting Concerns
- Safeguarding Adults: Welcome and Introduction Report abuse | Bedford Borough Council
- Anti-Social Behaviour council web pages: Help to resolve anti-social behaviour (ASB) | Bedford Borough Council
- Bedford Borough Allocations scheme 2021: Allocations Scheme April 2021

Appendix 2

National Legislation and Strategies

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Housing Act 1996 Parts 6 and 7
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Care Act 2014
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Children Act 2004
- Family Law Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Crime and Security Act 2010
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and the Regulator of Social Housing new Consumer Regulations
- National VAWG Strategy : Freedom from Violence and Abuse (2025)
- Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) (Clare's Law) The Council will also have regard to all relevant statutory guidance including:
- Domestic Abuse: Statutory Guidance
- Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities
- Allocation of accommodation guidance for local authorities
- DAHA Whole Housing Approach
- Working together to safeguard children – statutory guidance on multi agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children.
- Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) Statutory Guidance

Appendix 3

Local and National Support

Local support:

Bedfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership: This website has an up-to-date directory of all local (and national) Domestic Abuse services

https://bedsdv.org.uk/

National Support

A list of national support agencies which can also be found on the refuge website:[3]

- The National Domestic abuse Helpline: Call the **National Domestic Abuse Helpline** for free 24 hours a day on 0808 2000 247, **live chat to the National Domestic Abuse Helpline team** 10am – 10pm Monday to Friday or **fill in a contact form to request a call back from the Helpline team.**
- Emergency services: 999
- Men's Advice Line – specialist support for male survivors: 0808 8010327 **mensadviceline.org.uk**
- Galop – specialist support for LGBT+ survivors: 0800 999 5428 **galop.org.uk**
- Karma Nirvana – support for honour-based abuse: 0800 5999 247 **karmanirvana.org.uk**
- National Stalking Helpline: 0808 802 0300 **suzylamplugh.org**
- Revenge Porn Helpline: 0345 6000 459 **revengepornhelpline.org.uk**

Support for Black, Asian and ethnically diverse women

- Foreign and Commonwealth Office Forced Marriage Unit supports people who are trying to stop a forced marriage and women who need help leaving a marriage she has been forced into
  020 7008 0151 **www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage**
- The Refugee Council provides free advice and information to asylum seekers and refugees in UK: **refugeecouncil.org.uk**
- Immigration Advice Service: 0333 305 9272 **iasservices.org.uk**
  Asylum Aid offers free, independent legal advice and representation to asylum seekers
  020 7354 9264 **asylumaid.org.uk**
- Southall Black Sisters supports Asian and African-Caribbean women experiencing any kind of gender-based violence: 0208 571 0800 **southallblacksisters.org.uk**

[3] Information for professionals - Refuge

- Jewish Women's Aid Helpline is a confidential, non-judgemental, listening service
  0808 801 0500 **jwa.org.uk**
- Somalian Women's Centre offers advice and information for the Somali community living in and around Ealing on housing, immigration, nationality and asylum, education, employment and welfare rights | 020 8752 1787
- Shakti Women's Aid supports women experiencing domestic violence in Scotland
  0131 475 2399 **shaktiedinburgh.co.uk**
- The Kiran Project provides a range of services for Asian women experiencing domestic violence
  020 8558 1986 **kiranss.org.uk**
- Chinese Information and Advice Centre offers free legal advice and support including to women experiencing domestic violence | 020 7692 3697 **ciac.co.uk**
- BAWSO provides services and support for women experiencing all forms of gender-based violence in Wales | 0800 731 8147 (Helpline) **bawso.org.uk**
- JAN Trust works to combat poverty, discrimination, abuse and social exclusion among women including refugees or asylum seekers | 0208 889 9433 **jantrust.org**

Appendix 4

Data Protection

Bedford Borough Council will process personal data in accordance with UK data protection legislation, including the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Personal information collected in relation to this policy will only be used where it is necessary and lawful to do so, for the purposes of providing support, safeguarding individuals, and fulfilling the Council's statutory duties.

Information will be handled securely and processed for the purposes of delivering a statutory housing service. This may include contact for feedback purposes to continually improve how those services are delivered. Information will only shared with appropriate staff or partner agencies where there is a lawful basis, for example to protect individuals at risk, prevent harm, or where required by law

Further information about how the Council uses personal data, including individuals' rights, is available in the Council's Privacy Notices on our website.

Equality Analysis (EA) Reporting Template

Introduction

Before completing this form for the first time, please ensure you have undertaken the Equality Analysis Training on BBOLT and read the Equality Analysis Guidance (EAG). The training will give you an understanding why we undertake an EA, and the guidance will give you further information on completing this reporting form. You may also contact the EDI Champion(s) for your Directorate, or the Senior EDI Officer for further guidance on how to complete this form. Their details can be found on the intranet. The EDI Champions and Senior EDI Officer cannot sign off or validate the completion of the EA, this is the responsibility of your Director or Head of Service.

There are four parts to this form, they are:



To ensure a meaningful and informed Equality Analysis, it is essential that the EA is completed at the **beginning** or **formative stage** of any project or activity. Delaying it until the end risks missing critical information and limits our ability to fully consider the potential impacts on protected groups.

Late or rushed EAs may undermine our ability to demonstrate due regard to the **Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)** set under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, and can result in gaps in evidence, consultation, and proposed mitigations.

Embedding equality considerations from the outset ensures that inclusivity, fairness and transparency are woven into decision-making processes, reinforcing the credibility and integrity of our work.

Once the form has been completed, the EA remains as a live document until all actions set in Part 4 of this form have been completed. It is the responsibility of the service area to retain a copy of the completed Equality Analysis and to ensure that it is readily accessible upon request.

Part 1

Information about your Activity

(a) Title of activity / budget proposal title: Housing Domestic Abuse Policy	**(b) Committee meeting (Decision Maker) and date:** Portfolio Holder Decision (October 2026)
(c) Service area: Housing - homelessness	**(d) Is this activity:** ☒ **New** ☐ **Change** ☐ **Review** *Refer to Section 2 of the EAG to determine the appropriate option.*
(e) Lead Officer Name and Title: *Rebecca Franklin Review and Quality Officer*	(f) **Other Officer name(s) and title(s) supporting in carrying out the Equality Analysis, undertaking any reviews or actions: (***If applicable***)**
(g) Is this activity delivered as part of any Council Plans or Strategies, if 'Yes' please list below: ☐No ☒Yes: please specify the relevant plan(s) or strategy(ies): • Bedford Borough Council Corporate Plan • Domestic Abuse Strategy 2026-2031 • Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy	**(h) Approved by Director or Head of Service:** **Name: Anna Richardson** **Date: 20th October 2026** **Review Date: 20th October 2028**

(i) **Description of the Activity**

This equality analysis relates to the proposed Domestic Abuse Policy for the Housing Service.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 set out the intent to develop and publish a stand-alone Domestic Abuse and Housing Policy to support Council wide commitment to addressing and reducing domestic abuse. This is part of a wider project to seek DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) accreditation demonstrating best practice in the field.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 secured that those who are homeless as a result of domestic abuse have an automatic priority need for homelessness assistance under the Housing Act 1996. This means that housing services must ensure that housing provision is made for eligible homeless victims/survivors of domestic abuse including temporary accommodation.

The purpose of the Domestic Abuse Housing Policy is to ensure that individuals and households experiencing domestic abuse receive a consistent, fair and trauma-informed response when approaching the Council for housing assistance. The policy sets out how the Council will identify and respond to domestic abuse, assess housing need, prevent homelessness where possible, provide safe accommodation where necessary, and work with partner agencies to improve customer outcomes. The Policy will provide clear guidance for Housing Service staff and demonstrate the Council's commitment to preventing and responding to domestic abuse. It will set out the support that customers affected by domestic abuse can expect to receive from the Council, regardless of whether they are Council tenants or access Housing Services for another reason.

This Equality Impact Assessment considers the Housing Domestic Abuse Policy and assesses its impact on those households within the protected characteristic groups. The assessment considers whether any assessed impact is a positive, negative or neutral and sets out what steps Bedford Borough Council has taken or will take to reduce any impact identified.

(j): Who are the beneficiaries*? Which group(s) of people or individuals will be impacted by your activity or proposal?*

- ☒ **Service Users**
- ☒ **Staff**
- ☒ **Stakeholders**
- ☐ **Other, please state…….**
- ☐ **No direct beneficiaries** *(e.g. implementing administrative changes or updates, implementing agreed budget decision).*

Part 2

Screening Test

This section will help you decide if you need to complete Part 3 and 4 of this form. If in doubt, think: will this affect people? If it does, then it is likely you will need to complete the rest of this form. Please refer to Section 1 of the EAG to understand our PSED and for the list of protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, as well as other relevant groups. The following questions relate to the protected characteristics and other relevant groups.

a) The activity will treat everyone fairly, create equal opportunity with equal outcome, and/or promote cohesion.	Yes	☒	No	☐
b) The activity relates to an area where there are known inequalities. *(look for research done academically or any reports that has identified any inequalities for the protected characteristics and other relevant groups)*	Yes	☒	No	☐
c) It is foreseeable that the activity could / will affect protected characteristics or other relevant groups differently.	Yes	☒	No	☐
d) It is foreseeable that the activity could / will impact positively or negatively on one or more of the protected characteristics or other relevant groups.	Yes	☒	No	☐
e) Is it foreseeable that the activity can affect relationships between certain protected characteristics or other relevant groups?	Yes	☒	No	☐
f) Are you decommissioning or commissioning a service? *Please see Section 8 of the EA guidance.*	Yes	☐	No	☒
If you have ticked YES to one or more of the above questions, continue to complete Part 3 of the form.				

g) If you ticked NO to ALL the above questions in this section and Part 1 (j) identifies that there are no beneficiaries, then a full EA is not required, you do not need to complete Part 3 or 4 of this reporting form. Briefly explain how the activity has no relevance to the Council's equality duties in Part 4 (b) of this form. (maximum 150 words) *Please refer to Section 6 of the EAG for guidance*.

Part 3

Impact on Protected Characteristics and Other Relevant Groups

(a) Data, consultation, survey & research

*Decisions cannot be based on assumptions; they must be evidenced, and the source must be referenced. In this section **only list your source(s)** and where possible include a reference link to the source, such as the name of a dataset, reports, internal documents, website, or academic research. This will be your evidence to show how different individuals and groups with protected characteristics and other groups may be affected.*

*Some individuals and groups may belong to more than one of these groups at the same time. This is called **intersectionality**, and it helps us understand overlapping or compounding disadvantages. Some findings may not relate directly to equality but can be used as they will provide important context to help us understand broader impacts. Professional judgement and conclusions made on the likely equality impacts on the protected and other relevant groups must be based on information and evidence such as the examples listed in Section 5 of the EAG. The list is not exhaustive, and you may use other reliable sources.*

If the activity has a positive impact on one group but has an unavoidable negative impact on another group, this must be clearly explained and justified in Part 4 (b).

List evidence, data, information, and/or consultation used to understand the impact of your activity on the protected characteristics and other group.	**Evidence and data will be collated from the following sources:** Housing Options homelessness data. National domestic abuse statistics. Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Homelessness Code of Guidance. Census data Bedford 2021 The Domestic Abuse Policy was developed following consultation with a range of stakeholders, partner agencies, and individuals with lived experience. This included: • Consultation with domestic abuse support organisations and other relevant stakeholders. • Engagement with Housing Service users through a lived experience panel, with feedback coordinated and facilitated by the Children's Services Domestic Abuse Team. • Attendance by Housing management at a Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) workshop on the development of domestic abuse policies for housing services, with specialist advice sought to inform policy drafting. • Consultation with the Homelessness Partnership Board and wider local partner agencies involved in supporting those affected by domestic abuse. • Consideration and consultation through the Housing Committee. This engagement helped to ensure that the policy reflects best practice, statutory guidance, local partnership arrangements, and the experiences of those affected by domestic abuse. Guidance supports involving domestic abuse service providers and relevant local partners in developing housing approaches to domestic abuse

(b) Assessing Impact

*For the EA, '**Impact'** means lasting change that a decision and action can or may have on people's lives, whether this is for an individual or group/community. Impact for the EA is described in three ways:*

- ***Positive Impact:** Helps reduce barriers, improves access, promotes fair treatment, and/or improves relationships between groups.*
- ***Negative Impact:** Causes harm, exclusion, or unfair treatment. If this happens, it must be explained, and steps must be taken to remove or reduce the impact through actions set in Part 3 (c).*
- ***No or Neutral Impact:** The action does not noticeably affect individuals or groups.*

<table>
<tr><th>Protected Characteristics</th><th>Positive Impact</th><th>Negative Impact</th><th>No or neutral Impact</th><th>Key findings of data, consultation, survey etc. If there are gaps in the evidence, list this in the actions section below.</th></tr>
<tr><td>Age</td><td>☒</td><td>☐</td><td>☐</td><td>Domestic abuse can affect people at any age, however the approaches as homeless since 2018 are broken down as follows:

<table>
<tr><th>Age of primary applicant</th><th>Number of households</th><th>Percentage of applications</th></tr>
<tr><td>20 and under</td><td>18</td><td>1.73%</td></tr>
<tr><td>21-29</td><td>252</td><td>22.37%</td></tr>
<tr><td>30-44</td><td>572</td><td>49.67%</td></tr>
<tr><td>45-59</td><td>247</td><td>21.70%</td></tr>
<tr><td>60-65</td><td>33</td><td>2.90%</td></tr>
<tr><td>66+</td><td>18</td><td>1.64%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Grand Total</td><td>1140</td><td>100.00%</td></tr>
</table>

The majority of customers are between 30 and 59 years of age, however younger people and older people may experience increased vulnerability when fleeing abuse. The policy supports access to housing assistance for all victims and survivors.</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>The policy should enable victims and survivors of domestic abuse of all ages to access support more quickly, helping to improve safety, reduce the risk of further harm, and support positive long-term outcomes.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Disability</td><td>☒</td><td>☐</td><td>☐</td><td>A significant proportion of applicants who identified as their main reason for the loss of their settled accommodation being domestic abuse also state they have a disability.

<table><tr><th>Does primary applicant consider they have a disability</th><th>Number of households</th><th>Percentage of households</th></tr><tr><td>No</td><td>565</td><td>49.48%</td></tr><tr><td>Yes</td><td>435</td><td>38.01%</td></tr><tr><td>(blank)</td><td>140</td><td>12.52%</td></tr><tr><td>Grand Total</td><td>1140</td><td>100.00%</td></tr></table>
This compares to 15.28% of the general population who consider themselves to be disabled under the Equality Act (Census Bedford 2021).
This is consistent with national trends for women in particular who are more likely to have experienced domestic abuse if they are disabled. In the year ending March 2019, disabled women were more than twice as likely to have experienced domestic abuse at 17.3% than non-disabled women at 7.0%. (Crime Survey for England and Wales 2019).

The policy states that reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure that customers have equitable access to services and uses examples such as wheelchair accessible space and documents, a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter.

It is anticipated that the policy will have a positive impact on mental health through improved identification of vulnerability and links to appropriate support services. Domestic abuse frequently has a detrimental impact on mental wellbeing and housing stability.

Disabled victims may experience additional barriers to leaving abusive environments and may require adapted accommodation. The policy outlines that assessments will consider support and accessibility needs in providing a suitable option.</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><td>Gender Reassignment</td><td>☒</td><td>☐</td><td>☐</td><td>The Council does not collect meaningful data on this protected characteristic. Transgender people may face additional barriers in disclosing abuse and accessing support. Staff training and person-centred assessments will help reduce barriers; it is outlined in the policy that specialist training and a trauma informed approach will be used for customers who have experienced domestic abuse. Private interview rooms are stated in the policy to ensure a safe space to talk for customers.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Pregnancy and maternity</td><td>☒</td><td>☐</td><td>☐</td><td>Pregnant women and households with young children may be at heightened risk and benefit from prioritised housing assistance and safeguarding considerations.

Refuge reports that 14% of its service users were pregnant. The NHS reports that approximately 1 in 3 pregnant women experience domestic abuse. •Domestic abuse during pregnancy increases the risk of miscarriage, stillbirth, premature birth and other adverse outcomes for both mother and baby.

A significant proportion of applicants who approach where the main reason for the loss of their settled home was domestic abuse, had dependent children.

<table>
<tr><th>Number of children in household</th><th>Number of households</th><th>Percentage of households</th></tr>
<tr><td>0</td><td>592</td><td>52.45%</td></tr>
<tr><td>1</td><td>215</td><td>18.73%</td></tr>
<tr><td>2</td><td>201</td><td>17.53%</td></tr>
<tr><td>3</td><td>71</td><td>6.16%</td></tr>
<tr><td>4</td><td>40</td><td>3.36%</td></tr>
<tr><td>5</td><td>9</td><td>0.77%</td></tr>
<tr><td>6</td><td>2</td><td>0.17%</td></tr>
<tr><td>7</td><td>1</td><td>0.08%</td></tr>
<tr><td>(blank)</td><td>9</td><td>0.75%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Grand Total</td><td>1140</td><td>100.00%</td></tr>
</table>

The policy outlines the additional safeguarding in place for customers with children and the cross-service work to ensure holistic support.</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Race</td><td>☒</td><td>☐</td><td>☐</td><td>Victims from minority ethnic backgrounds may face language, cultural or immigration-related barriers. Interpretation services and partnership working will help ensure equitable access. This is referenced in the policy.

The data for all applications where domestic abuse was recorded as the main reason for homelessness is below:

<table>
<tr><th>Ethnicity</th><th>Number of households</th><th>Percentage of households</th></tr>
<tr><td>Any other ethnic group</td><td>10</td><td>0.88%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Any other white background</td><td>106</td><td>9.30%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Arab</td><td>5</td><td>0.44%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Asian any other</td><td>12</td><td>1.05%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Asian Bangladeshi</td><td>39</td><td>3.42%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Asian Indian</td><td>40</td><td>3.51%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Asian Pakistani</td><td>50</td><td>4.39%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Black African</td><td>49</td><td>4.30%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Black any other</td><td>5</td><td>0.44%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Black or black British Caribbean</td><td>43</td><td>3.77%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Irish</td><td>7</td><td>0.61%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Mixed Other / multiple ethnic background</td><td>32</td><td>2.81%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Mixed white & black African</td><td>8</td><td>0.70%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Mixed white & black Asian</td><td>8</td><td>0.70%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Mixed white & black Caribbean</td><td>44</td><td>3.86%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Not stated</td><td>15</td><td>1.32%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Unknown</td><td>3</td><td>0.26%</td></tr>
<tr><td>White British</td><td>490</td><td>42.98%</td></tr>
<tr><td>(blank)</td><td>174</td><td>15.26%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Grand Total</td><td>1140</td><td>100.00%</td></tr>
</table>
</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>It is acknowledged that the policy relates to statutory services for housing advice and therefore will not include those customers with no recourse to public funds. The policy however will have a positive impact through clearer pathways to specialist advice and support. Staff will be provided with guidance on identifying and referring vulnerable households for specialist assistance to charitable partners.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Religion or belief</td><td>☒</td><td>☐</td><td>☐</td><td>There is no meaningful data recorded on religion for homelessness approaches. The policy ensures that accommodation and support arrangements will take account of religious and cultural needs where possible.

The policy recognises that domestic abuse can affect people from all cultural backgrounds and that some individuals may face additional barriers to seeking help. Staff will receive appropriate training to recognise and respond to domestic abuse, honour-based abuse, forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) in a culturally sensitive and informed manner.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sex</td><td>☒</td><td>☐</td><td>☐</td><td>Women are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse and are therefore likely to benefit from improved access to housing assistance, homelessness prevention and safe accommodation. Local and national evidence demonstrates this disproportionate impact.
For customers who were identified as approaching for homeless advice where the reason for the loss of settled accommodation was domestic abuse, the majority were female.

<table>
<tr><th>Sex</th><th>Number of households</th><th>Percentage of households</th></tr>
<tr><td>Female</td><td>977</td><td>85.49%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Male</td><td>158</td><td>14.10%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Prefer not to say</td><td>2</td><td>0.17%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Unknown</td><td>3</td><td>0.24%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Grand Total</td><td>1140</td><td>100.00%</td></tr>
</table>
</td></tr>
</table>

				The policy recognises that domestic abuse disproportionately affects women, while also acknowledging that men and people of all sexes can be victims and survivors of domestic abuse. Support will be available to all individuals regardless of sex, ensuring equitable access to services. The policy promotes a fair, inclusive and trauma-informed approach, ensuring that all survivors are treated with dignity, respect and sensitivity. Staff will be trained to respond appropriately to the needs of survivors. As a result, the policy is expected to have a positive impact by improving access to support and ensuring that services are responsive, inclusive and non-discriminatory for all survivors of domestic abuse.
Sexual Orientation	☒	☐	☐	LGBTQ+ victims may experience additional barriers when seeking support. The service will promote inclusive practice and ensure staff receive appropriate training to increase awareness and understanding of the needs of LGBTQ+ individuals, helping to maintain equitable access to support. The trauma-informed approach ensures that services are responsive to the specific experiences and barriers that may be faced by LGBTQ+ survivors, including fear of discrimination and under-representation. This supports equitable access to services and promotes an inclusive and non-discriminatory response to domestic abuse.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	☒	☐	☐	The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises that domestic abuse can occur within a wide range of intimate, familial and personal relationships and is not limited to those who are married or in a civil partnership. The policy adopts this inclusive approach and ensures that support is available regardless of an individual's marital status. As a result, no adverse impact is anticipated for people who are married or in a civil partnership.

Other groups	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	No or neutral Impact	**Key findings of data, consultation, survey etc**. *If there are gaps in the evidence, list this in the actions section below.*

<table>
<tr><td>Care Leavers and Care Experienced People [1]</td><td>☒</td><td>☐</td><td>☐</td><td>There is no anticipated impact that is specific to care leavers. However, care leavers, alongside all other customer groups, are expected to benefit from the trauma-informed approach set out within the policy. The policy commits to providing safe and supportive environments in which customers can speak with trained professionals, be listened to in a non-judgemental manner, and be empowered to make informed decisions about their housing and support needs. These measures are expected to have a positive impact on all victims and survivors of domestic abuse who access the service.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Socio-economic[2]</td><td>☒</td><td>☐</td><td>☐</td><td>Economic status

Only 25% of customer who approached as homeless where the reason for the loss of their settled accommodation was domestic abuse are in full or part-time work. The policy will have a positive impact as housing will take a holistic view and include referrals to support services where this is appropriate.

The policy also outlines how customers in employment will be considered when assessing suitability of temporary and permanent accommodation.

<table>
<tr><th>Economic status</th><th>Number of households</th><th>Percentage of households</th></tr>
<tr><td>Apprentice</td><td>1</td><td>0.09%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Cannot work (long term sickness or disability)</td><td>161</td><td>13.96%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Child under 18</td><td>16</td><td>1.33%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Full-time employment</td><td>148</td><td>13.01%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Full-time student</td><td>18</td><td>1.63%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Government training/Work Programme</td><td>3</td><td>0.27%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Job seeker</td><td>320</td><td>27.87%</td></tr>
</table>
</td></tr>
</table>

[1] Bedford Borough Council passed a motion for this group to be recognised as a protected characteristic.

[2] Not a protected characteristic, but important to consider this when undertaking the EA.

				Not seeking work	194	17.12%
				Other adult	8	0.66%
				Part-time employment	134	11.71%
				Refused	1	0.08%
				Retired	14	1.30%
				Self-employed	11	1.00%
				Zero hours contract	8	0.75%
				(blank)	103	9.23%
				Grand Total	**1140**	**100.00%**
Carers	☒	☐	☐	There is no anticipated impact that is specific to carers. However, carers, alongside all other customer groups, are expected to benefit from the trauma-informed approach set out within the policy. The policy commits to providing safe and supportive environments in which customers can speak with trained professionals, be listened to in a non-judgemental manner, and be empowered to make informed decisions about their housing and support needs. These measures are expected to have a positive impact on all victims and survivors of domestic abuse who access the service.		
Rural Communities	☐	☐	☒	The policy is expected to have a positive impact on residents of rural communities who experience domestic abuse. By setting out clear pathways to access housing advice, support, homelessness assistance, and specialist domestic abuse services, the policy may help reduce some of the barriers faced by those living in more isolated locations. The commitment to trauma-informed practice, partnership working, and providing safe opportunities to disclose abuse may support individuals who have limited access to local services or support networks. Where safe and appropriate, the policy also recognises the importance of maintaining connections to employment, education, healthcare, and family support networks when considering accommodation options.		

(c) Actions

Complete this section to explain how you will mitigate any negative impacts identified above, if any further consultation is needed, or how you will address any gaps in data/ evidence. You may also use this section to include any relevant information that supports your analysis but could not be captured in any of the tables above.

Actions	What will be done	By whom?	By When?	Date Completed and outcome
Are there any gaps in the evidence? if so, what will need to be done to address this? *e.g. further consultation, obtain additional data.*	Monitoring service outcomes by protected characteristic where data is available. This is not captured on every case as not mandatory for customers to complete at point of application. Officers to encourage customers	Housing team members	Ongoing	NA
What are the negative impacts identified. How will you lessen the impact?				
Are there other relevant actions and if so, what are these?	Regular staff training on domestic abuse and equality issues.	External training providers and internal training workshops	Ongoing	NA

	Use of interpreters and accessible communication formats. Partnership working with specialist domestic abuse organisations. Periodic review of policy effectiveness and equality impacts.	External translation service or team members Identified partners working in the domestic abuse	Case by case	Accessibility adjustments already in place within the service
Is there any other relevant information to support your analysis?				

Part 4

Conclusion

(a) Recommendation

You will need to justify your conclusion in Part 4 (b)

No major change required *The evidence shows no negative impact or potential risk for discrimination.*	☒
Adjustments required *The evidence shows that your activity requires changes or adjustments to ensure it does not negatively impact any protected characteristics and other relevant group or miss opportunities to have a positive impact.*	☐
Justification to continue the activity *A negative impact on equality has been identified. However, the activity can continue because the activity does not unlawfully discriminate as there are reasonable and/or legal factors that make it objectively justified, 'a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim'.* *Please refer to the EAG, Section 7 'Objectively Justified'.*	☐
Stop the activity *The equality analysis identified that the activity unlawfully discriminates, cannot be mitigated or objectively justified. The activity must therefore be stopped.*	☐

(b) Summary of analysis

Insert a summary of your equality analysis and explain your recommendation *(maximum 125 words)*. Please refer to Section 9 of the EAG for more information.
This summary should also be used to complete the Equality Impact section of any related Corporate Leadership Team or Committee reports, as part of the 'Key Implications' section in the report template.

The Domestic Abuse Housing Policy is expected to have an overall positive impact on equality. The policy supports the Council's duties under the Equality Act 2010, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and homelessness legislation by helping vulnerable households access housing assistance, support and safe accommodation.

The policy seeks to remove barriers to accessing housing services, improve consistency of decision making and ensure housing responses are trauma-informed and person-centred.

The Equality Analysis concludes that the Domestic Abuse Housing Policy is likely to have a significant positive impact on equality of opportunity, particularly for women and other groups disproportionately affected by domestic abuse and homelessness. No adverse impacts have been identified that cannot be mitigated through policy implementation, staff training and ongoing monitoring.