

MAKE A STAND – DOMESTIC ABUSE PLEDGE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report outlines the Make a Stand pledge (The Pledge) and Argyll & Bute Council's commitment to sign up to it.
- 1.2 The Pledge has been developed by the Chartered Institute of Housing in partnership with Women's Aid and the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance. It was created to encourage housing organisations to make a commitment to support people experiencing domestic abuse.
- 1.3 Housing Services remains committed to preventing homelessness arising from domestic abuse and responding sensitively and appropriately when it does occur.
- 1.4 By signing the Pledge, the Council has received recognition as an organisation that is committed to tackling domestic abuse and supporting victims.

1.5 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Committee:

- (i) Endorse the work being carried out to meet the four commitments of the Pledge.
- (ii) Note the work currently underway to support people experiencing domestic abuse
- (iii) Support further enhancements to our approach to addressing and responding to domestic abuse.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to outline and explain The Make a Stand pledge (The Pledge). The Pledge has been developed by the Chartered Institute of Housing in partnership with Women’s Aid and the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance. It was created to encourage housing organisations to make a commitment to support people experiencing domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse is one of the biggest issues in society today. The true scale of the problem is difficult to determine because a large proportion of domestic abuse goes unreported. In 2017/2018, Housing Services received 24 homeless presentations from households experiencing domestic abuse and 18 presentations in 2018/2019. Despite a reduction in presentations from the previous year, Housing Services remains committed to preventing homelessness arising from domestic abuse and responding sensitively and appropriately when it does occur.

Argyll and Bute Women’s Aid received 140 referrals between April 2018 and March 2019 and between April 2019 and July 2019, there has been 68 referrals.

To help support the service achieve this aim, the Council has signed up to the Pledge, which includes four focused commitments, to intervene early in cases to prevent homelessness, where possible, and provide support for people experiencing domestic abuse.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 It is recommended that Committee:
- (i) Endorse the work being carried out to meet the four commitments of the Pledge.
 - (ii) Note the work currently underway to support people experiencing domestic abuse

(iii) Support further enhancements to our approach to addressing and responding to domestic abuse.

3.2 By signing the Pledge, the Council has received recognition as an organisation that is committed to tackling domestic abuse and supporting victims. Various resources and materials have been provided to promote this, including electronic resources that can be used on our website and social media channels

3.3 In order to further improve our approach to addressing and responding to domestic abuse we will:

- Review the Local Housing Strategy and identify further ways to raise awareness of the impact of domestic abuse, through the full range of resources provided through participation in the Pledge
- Strengthen our partnership working with RSL's to ensure a consistent approach to all applicants and tenants.

4.0 DETAIL

4.1 The four commitments are:

- Put in in place and embed a policy to support residents who are affected by domestic abuse
- Make information about national and local domestic abuse support services available on your website and in other appropriate places so that they are easily accessible for residents and staff
- Put in place a HR Policy, or amend an existing Policy, to support members of staff who may be experiencing domestic abuse
- Appoint a champion at senior level in your organisation to own the activity you are doing to support people experiencing domestic abuse

4.2 Put in in place and embed a policy to support residents who are affected by domestic abuse

Current activity includes:

- The Council retains the statutory duty to take homeless applications and provide emergency accommodation.
- As a partner in the Home Argyll Common Allocation Policy, this policy prioritises applicants experiencing domestic abuse, enabling a planned move to safe accommodation where possible.
- Housing Services is a partner on the Violence Against Women & Girls Partnership Group.

- Argyll & Bute Council have a contract in place to fund Argyll & Bute Women's Aid and also provides a building for a refuge.
- Argyll & Bute Women's Aid also have children's worker in place.
- Staff training – Housing staff have received awareness or more in depth training on domestic abuse.
- An annual questionnaire issued to staff and partners helps to identify gaps in service provision or training needs.
- Partnership working – work with various partners across Argyll & Bute, including Carr Gomm, HELP and Registered Social Landlords.

4.3 Make information about national and local domestic abuse support services available on your website and in other appropriate places so that they are easily accessible for residents and staff

Current activity includes:

- The Argyll & Bute Council website has a page dedicated to domestic abuse
- Leaflets are widely available in central and locality based offices and in interview rooms.
- The online Housing Options Self-Assessment portal has information about support services
- Domestic abuse is discussed with relevant staff during case reviews and supervision
- Regular meetings are held between Housing Services and Women's Aid staff
- HOME Argyll website contains information on Housing Options and how to get help.
- Representation and involvement at the Housing Options HUBs to support the development of the national Housing Options Toolkit
- Housing Services staff support and promote work in this area through participation in various working groups and committees including the Violence Against Women & Girls Partnership, Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), Child and Adult Protection Committee, Corporate Parenting Board.

4.4 Put in place a HR Policy, or amend an existing Policy, to support members of staff who may be experiencing domestic abuse

Current activity includes:

- The Council is currently working on a new Domestic Abuse policy for employees.

4.5 **Appoint a champion at senior level in your organisation to own the activity you are doing to support people experiencing domestic abuse**

Currently activity includes:

- The Executive Director with responsibility for Housing has agreed to be Argyll & Bute Council's Champion.

4.6 The sign up process involved an online application via the Chartered Institute of Housing website. To date, 11 other Scottish local authorities have signed up to the Pledge.

5.0 **CONCLUSION**

5.1 Argyll & Bute Council is already fully committed to working with partners to tackle domestic abuse and support victims. It is recognised that suitable housing can provide safety and security and alleviate the impact of domestic abuse.

By signing the Make a Stand Pledge, Argyll & Bute Council are committed to taking action to support people in Argyll & Bute who are experiencing domestic abuse.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Policy – The Council is working on a new domestic abuse policy

6.2 Financial - None

6.3 Legal - None

6.4 HR – The Council is working on a new domestic abuse policy

6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty: None

6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics - None

6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty - None

6.5.3 Islands - None

6.6 Risk - None

6.7 Customer Service – Opportunity to improve outcomes for people who may be at risk of homelessness or homeless or where early intervention is possible.

Executive Director with responsibility for Housing: Pippa Milne

Policy Lead: Councillor Robin Currie

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