



# TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

## EXECUTIVE SERVICES

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**Chief Executive**  
Damian Roberts

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**NB - This agenda contains proposals, recommendations and options. These do not represent Council policy or decisions until they have received proper consideration through the full decision making process.**

Contact: Democratic Services  
[committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk](mailto:committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk)

13 January 2026

To: MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE  
(Copies to all Members of the Council)

Dear Sir/Madam

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the General Purposes Committee to be held in the Council Chamber, Gibson Drive, Kings Hill on Wednesday, 21st January, 2026 commencing at 7.30 pm.

Members of the Committee are required to attend in person. Other Members may attend in person or participate online via MS Teams.

Information on how to observe the meeting will be published on the Council's website.

Yours faithfully

DAMIAN ROBERTS

Chief Executive

## A G E N D A

1. Guidance for the Conduct of Meetings 5 - 8

### PART 1 - PUBLIC

2. Apologies for absence

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| 3. | Notification of Substitute Members | 9 - 10  |
| 4. | Declarations of interest           | 11 - 12 |

Members are reminded of their obligation under the Council's Code of Conduct to disclose any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests in any matter(s) to be considered or being considered at the meeting. These are explained in the Code of Conduct on the Council's website at [Code of conduct for members – Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council \(tmbc.gov.uk\)](https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/code-of-conduct-for-members).

Members in any doubt about such declarations are advised to contact Legal or Democratic Services in advance of the meeting.

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|----|---------|---------|
| 5. | Minutes | 13 - 16 |
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To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of General Purposes Committee held on 8 October 2025.

#### **Matters for Recommendation to the Council**

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| 6. | Localism Act - Pay Policy | 17 - 28 |
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This report summarises the requirements of the Localism Act and presents an updated Pay Policy Statement for 2026/27.

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| 7. | Pay Award 2026/2027 | 29 - 54 |
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This report provides Members with information to recommend to Full Council, the Council's pay award for employees for 2026/27.

#### **Matters for Decision under Delegated Powers**

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| 8. | Member Development Strategy 2026 - 2028 | 55 - 68 |
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This report seeks approval of a new Member Development Strategy 2026-2028, setting out how Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council will support and develop its Members to ensure the successful delivery of its strategic priorities.

- |    |   |          |
|----|---|----------|
| 9. | Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance Accreditation - Policies and Procedures | 69 - 112 |
|----|---|----------|

This report seeks approval from Members for adoption of a set of policies and procedures, developed to support both staff members and residents who may be experiencing domestic abuse, as part of the Borough Council's work to achieve accreditation from the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA).

- |     |              |           |
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| 10. | Urgent Items | 113 - 114 |
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Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent due to special circumstances and of which notice has been given to the Chief Executive.

## **Matters for consideration in Private**

11. Exclusion of Press and Public 115 - 116

The Chairman to move that the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting during consideration of any items the publication of which would disclose exempt information.

## **PART 2 - PRIVATE**

### **Matters for Recommendation to the Council and for Decision under Delegated Powers**

12. Establishment Report 117 - 158

(Reason: LGA 1972 – Sch 12A Paragraph 2 – Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual.)

This report sets out for Members' approval a number of establishment changes recommended by the Council's Management Team. Members should note that, in accordance with adopted conventions, all of the savings/costs referred to in this report reflect the salary at the top of the scale/grade plus associated on costs.

13. Urgent Items 159 - 160

Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent due to special circumstances and of which notice has been given to the Chief Executive.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

Cllr M R Rhodes (Chair)  
Cllr A McDermott (Vice-Chair)

Cllr B Banks  
Cllr K Barton  
Cllr L Chapman  
Cllr J Clokey  
Cllr D A S Davis

Cllr B A Parry  
Cllr R V Roud  
Cllr K B Tanner  
Cllr K S Tunstall

## **GUIDANCE ON HOW MEETINGS WILL BE CONDUCTED**

- (1) Most of the Borough Council meetings are livestreamed, unless there is exempt or confidential business being discussed, giving residents the opportunity to see decision making in action. These can be watched via our YouTube channel. When it is not possible to livestream meetings they are recorded and uploaded as soon as possible:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCPp-IJISNgoF-ugSzxiAPfw/featured>

- (2) There are no fire drills planned during the time a meeting is being held. For the benefit of those in the meeting room, the fire alarm is a long continuous bell and the exits are via the doors used to enter the room. An officer on site will lead any evacuation.
- (3) Should you need this agenda or any of the reports in a different format, or have any other queries concerning the meeting, please contact Democratic Services on [committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk](mailto:committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk) in the first instance.

### **Attendance:**

- Members of the Committee are required to attend in person and be present in the meeting room. Only these Members are able to move/ second or amend motions, and vote.
- Other Members of the Council can join via MS Teams and can take part in any discussion and ask questions, when invited to do so by the Chair, but cannot move/ second or amend motions or vote on any matters. Members participating remotely are reminded that this does not count towards their formal committee attendance.
- Occasionally, Members of the Committee are unable to attend in person and may join via MS Teams in the same way as other Members. However, they are unable to move/ second or amend motions or vote on any matters if they are not present in the meeting room. As with other Members joining via MS Teams, this does not count towards their formal committee attendance.
- Officers can participate in person or online.

- Members of the public addressing an Area Planning Committee should attend in person. However, arrangements to participate online can be considered in certain circumstances. Please contact [committee.services@tmhc.gov.uk](mailto:committee.services@tmhc.gov.uk) for further information.

Before formal proceedings start there will be a sound check of Members/Officers in the room. This is done as a roll call and confirms attendance of voting Members.

### **Ground Rules:**

The meeting will operate under the following ground rules:

- Members in the Chamber should indicate to speak in the usual way and use the fixed microphones in front of them. These need to be switched on when speaking or comments will not be heard by those participating online. Please switch off microphones when not speaking.
- If there any technical issues the meeting will be adjourned to try and rectify them. If this is not possible there are a number of options that can be taken to enable the meeting to continue. These will be explained if it becomes necessary.

For those Members participating online:

- please request to speak using the 'chat or hand raised function';
- please turn off cameras and microphones when not speaking;
- please do not use the 'chat function' for other matters as comments can be seen by all;
- Members may wish to blur the background on their camera using the facility on Microsoft teams.
- Please avoid distractions and general chat if not addressing the meeting
- Please remember to turn off or silence mobile phones

### **Voting:**

Voting may be undertaken by way of a roll call and each Member should verbally respond For, Against, Abstain. The vote will be noted and announced by the Democratic Services Officer.

Alternatively, votes may be taken by general affirmation if it seems that there is agreement amongst Members. The Chairman will announce the outcome of the vote for those participating and viewing online.

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General Purposes Committee					
	Conservative	Liberal Democratic	Green	Ind. Kent Alliance	Labour
1	Robin Betts	David Thornevell	Lee Athwal		
2	Matt Boughton	Michelle Tatton	Steve Crisp		
3	Robert Cannon	Anita Oakley	Mark Hood		
4	Des Keers	Frani Hoskins	Robert Oliver		
5	Adem Mehmet	Garry Bridge	Stacey Pilgrim		

May 2025

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Declarations of interest

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## **TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday, 8th October, 2025**

**Present:** Cllr M R Rhodes (Chair), Cllr A McDermott (Vice-Chair), Cllr K Barton, Cllr L Chapman, Cllr M A Coffin, Cllr J Clokey, Cllr D A S Davis, Cllr B A Parry and Cllr K B Tanner.

**In attendance:** Councillors R P Betts, M D Boughton, M A J Hood, D W King and W E Palmer\* were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

(\*participated via MS Teams)

An apology for absence was received from Councillor B Banks.

### **PART 1 - PUBLIC**

#### **GP 25/25 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

There were no substitute members.

#### **GP 25/26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

#### **GP 25/27 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 11 June 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **MATTERS FOR DECISION UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**

#### **GP 25/28 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY - INITIAL THEMES AND NEXT STEPS**

The report the Director of Central Services and Deputy Chief Executive outlined the initial themes identified for inclusion in the Council's Member Development Strategy. The report built upon the training initially delivered as part of the Member Induction programme and aimed to present a more structured programme shaped by Member priorities whilst taking into account time constraints. The initial document outlined the proposed direction of travel, as discussed with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee, and centred on five key training areas: Committee-specific topics, legislative updates, high-profile or high-risk service areas, finance and governance and compliance. To ensure the

strategy aligned with the needs of Members, it was recommended that all Members be surveyed to identify their training priorities.

During discussion, Members felt that personal development plans might be difficult to implement due to time constraints and any other obligations, and they might not suit all Members.

The importance of compliance training was acknowledged, highlighting cyber security as especially valuable. In addition, it was noted that external resources such as the Local Government Associations (LGAs) programmes helped Members to enhance their skills and adapt to new challenges.

**RESOLVED:** That

- (1) the emerging themes for the Member Development Strategy, be noted;
- (2) the proposal to survey all Members on their development needs, be endorsed; and
- (3) the General Purposes Committee receive a draft strategy in January 2026.

### **MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE**

#### **GP 25/29 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Chairman moved, it was seconded and

**RESOLVED:** That as public discussion would disclose exempt information, the following matters be considered in private.

### **PART 2 - PRIVATE**

#### **MATTERS FOR DECISION UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**

#### **GP 25/30 ESTABLISHMENT REPORT**

(Reason: LGA 1972 – Sch 12A Paragraph 1 – Information relating to an individual)

The report set out for Members' approval a number of establishment changes recommended by Management Team. Members noted that, in accordance with adopted conventions, all of the savings/costs referred to in the report reflected the salary at the top of the scale/grade plus associated on costs.

**RESOLVED:** That

- (1) the hours of the Senior Electoral Services Officer (DC0401) post be increased from 30 hours to 37;
- (2) the hours of the Electoral Services Officer (DC403) post be increased from 29.5 hours to 37;
- (3) post DF003, Chief Financial Services Officer (M4) be redesignated to Financial Services Manager at M5;
- (4) the Senior Accountancy Assistant (Scale 5/6) full time post DF0296, be deleted;
- (5) a new Senior Accountant (Capital and Treasury) post, full time, grade M9 be established;
- (6) a new Transformation Manager post, full time, grade M6 be established;
- (7) the Head of Licensing, Community Safety and Customer Services post DR0402 be deleted;
- (8) the 30 hours Customer Services Advisor (Scale 4) post DB0325, be deleted; and
- (9) a Senior Service Supervisor post, full time, graded SO be established.

The meeting ended at 7.53 pm

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## General Purposes Committee

21 January 2026

### Part 1 - Public

#### Recommendation to Council



Cabinet Member	Not Applicable
Responsible Officer	Adrian Stanfield, Director of Central Services and Deputy Chief Executive
Report Author	Mathew Brooks, Head of Human Resources & Development

#### Localism Act – Pay Policy

##### 1 Summary and Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report summarises the requirements of the Localism Act and presents an updated Pay Policy Statement for 2026/27.

##### 2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

- 2.1 Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.
- 2.2 Having a robust Pay Policy Statement assists the Council in achieving its priority of “Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council”.

##### 3 Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that this committee commends the pay policy in Annex 1 to this report for adoption at the Council meeting on 24 February 2026.

##### 4 Introduction and Background

- 4.1 Section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011 requires English and Welsh local authorities to review their pay policy statement for each financial year. This report summarises the requirements of the Act and presents an updated Pay Policy Statement for 2026/27.

##### 5 Contents of the updated Pay Policy Statement

- 5.1 Members will note that there have not been many significant changes in the Council’s remuneration policy. The substantive content of the updated Pay Policy Statement in Annex 1 is nearly identical to the Council’s Pay Policy Statement for

2025/26. The main updates are related to the actual pay received by staff, the pay multiple data and the number of officers in specific graded posts.

- 5.2 There is also a new paragraph which has been added to confirm that the Council operates a long service award scheme. This scheme is not new; it has been in place for several years but has not previously been reflected in the Council's Pay Policy Statement.
- 5.3 The term "chief officer" encompasses both statutory and non-statutory chief officers, as well as their deputies. Accordingly, within the Pay Policy Statement set out in Annex 1, the information regarding chief officer remuneration reflects the Council's Establishment as at 1 April 2025. At that time, this included the post of Director of Finance and Transformation, which was subsequently removed from the Establishment on 1 September 2025.
- 5.4 The Act's definition of remuneration includes pay, charges, fees, allowances, benefits in kind, enhancement of pension entitlements and termination payments. All of these elements have been covered in the pay policy statement attached in Annex 1.
- 5.5 In order to provide a holistic and transparent context for the remuneration of chief officers and their deputies, the pay policy in Annex 1 provides an overview of the pay elements for all Council employees.

## **6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 6.1 There are no additional financial resource implications as a result of the Pay Policy Statement as it is setting out what is already in place.
- 6.2 The aim of Section 38 of the Localism Act is to ensure there is openness and transparency with regard to the allocation of public money to employee remuneration.

## **7 Risk Assessment**

- 7.1 The Council is legally obliged to comply with the Localism Act's requirement to have reviewed the Pay Policy Statement by 31 March 2026.

## **8 Legal Implications**

- 8.1 The policy set out in Annex 1 contains all of the elements of a statutory pay policy as stipulated in section 38 (1) of the Localism Act 2011.
- 8.2 The attached pay policy is also compliant with Regulation 7 of the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England & Wales) Regulations 2006 and the Local Government Pension Scheme (Administration) Regulations 2008 & 2014.

- 8.3 The definition of the terms “chief officer” and “deputy chief officer” is in accordance with section 2 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

## **9 Consultation and Communications**

- 9.1 No formal consultation with staff or trade unions have been undertaken in the production of the new Pay Policy Statement due to the lack of any substantial changes.

## **10 Implementation**

- 10.1 The updated Pay Policy Statement will take effect on 1 April 2026.

## **11 Cross Cutting Issues**

### **11.1 Climate Change and Biodiversity**

- 11.1.1 A moderate source of emissions is likely to be maintained at current levels or increased.

- 11.1.2 Climate change advice has not been sought in the preparation of the options and recommendations in this report.

### **11.2 Equalities and Diversity**

- 11.2.1 Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups. The decisions recommended through this paper directly impact on end users. The impact has been analysed and varies between groups of people. The results of this analysis are set out immediately below.

- 11.2.2 The Equality Act 2010 places requirements upon all public sector bodies to ensure that its policies and procedures are promoting equality. The measures summarised within the Pay Policy Statement support this requirement.

### **11.3 Other If Relevant**

- Human Resources

- 11.3.1 The Pay Policy Statement applies to all members of the Council's workforce.

Background Papers	None
Annexes	Annex 1 – Pay Policy Statement 2026/27

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## **Annex 1**

### **Pay Policy Statement 2026/27**

#### **Introduction**

When determining remuneration levels, the Council is mindful of the requirement to balance the needs of managing scarce public resources with the need to secure and retain high-quality employees.

The Council aligns its reward strategy with organisational needs by an emphasis on cash rewards, and ensuring that pay is determined by job requirements.

The Council aims to operate a consistent and equitable organisation-wide reward system by placing the responsibility for remuneration decisions with a committee of elected councillors, the General Purposes Committee, and the responsibility for administering the pay policy within the Council's Human Resources team.

Section 38 (1) of the Localism Act 2011 requires the council to prepare an annual pay policy statement for 2026/27. The Act specifies that the following must be included in the pay policy statement:

- the level and elements of remuneration for each chief officer
- the policy on the remuneration of chief officers on recruitment
- increases and additions to their remuneration including performance related pay, bonuses, charges, fees, allowances, benefits in kind and termination payments
- a definition of the "lowest paid employees" and the policy on the remuneration of this group
- the policy on the relationship between the remuneration of its chief officers and other officers
- the policy on re-employing someone who has been made redundant.

This statement will be published on the Council's website.

#### **Section 1 – Remuneration of statutory and non-statutory Chief Officers and Deputy Chief Officers**

The term "chief officer" within The Localism Act includes both statutory and non-statutory chief officers, and their deputies. The actual remuneration for these roles is available on the Council's website <https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/council/council-works-constitution/2>

The salary scales for the statutory and non-statutory Chief Officers and Deputy Chief Officers in post on 1 April 2025 is set out below.

<b>No of Chief &amp; Deputy Chief Officers</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>% of M2 benchmark</b>	<b>Pay Point Range</b>
15 (2 part time)	M7	51.0%	131-134
10 (1 part time)	M6	56.0%	141- 144
5	M5	61.0%	147 - 150
6 (1 part time)	M4	70.0%	151- 154
3	M2a	97.5%	181- 184
1	M2	100%	186-189
1	M1	125.0%	191- 194

### **Fee for acting as the Returning Officer**

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council is required to appoint a Returning Officer by virtue of section 35 of the Representation of the People Act 1983.

In Tonbridge & Malling, the Chief Executive has been appointed as the Returning Officer. This is a personal appointment, separate from their other duties. In this capacity they are the Returning Officer for UK Parliamentary elections and elections to the Borough Council and to Parish Councils within this Borough.

The Returning Officer fee is payable for the substantial additional duties undertaken, and leadership required of the Returning Officer in planning, delivering and undertaking the elections, and recognises the personal nature and personal responsibility of the role of the Returning Officer.

For Borough and Parish Council elections, the Returning Officer fee is calculated in accordance with an agreed Kent Scale of Fees. For National, and Police & Crime Commissioner elections the fee rate is set by central government.

### **Section 2 – Remuneration of the lowest paid employees**

In compliance with Section 38 of the Localism Act, for the purposes of this statement the “lowest paid employee” has been defined as those who are engaged by the Council as Cleaners.

On 1 April 2025 employees in these posts received a full-time annual salary equivalent of approximately £24,303.

### **Section 3 – Decision on pay**

The pay of all council employees (including chief officers) is determined by the evaluated grade of the post. The pay band for most jobs within the council (including chief officers) is very narrow, typically based on 3 or 4 incremental points.

Progression through the pay band is based on length of service, subject to the achievement of expected performance standards, and thus recognises development in a role over time based on the accumulation of experience and knowledge.

It is anticipated that during 2026/27 the total number of permanent and fixed term contract staff on the Council's payroll will be approximately 270 in any one month.

The Council has not adopted the national local government job evaluation or grading schemes but has developed a locally negotiated framework that more closely reflects its own requirements.

Within this framework there are two remuneration "families". The first has been developed for the Council's professional and senior managerial cohorts, and includes chief officers. The second is for supervisory, technical and administrative staff.

All staff (including chief officers) are appointed to the organisation at the bottom of the grade, unless there are exceptional circumstances based on business need.

#### **Annual Pay Award**

The salary of all council employees (including chief officers) may increase annually by an annual pay award which is locally determined taking into consideration:

- "caps" on public sector pay rates set by the Government
- the council's ability to pay
- inflation levels
- the "going rate" of pay awards in neighbouring authorities and nationally
- recruitment and retention levels.

### **Section 4 – Pay structure and pay relationships.**

The Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency September 2011 requires that there is a process established to

monitor the rate of growth of senior earnings compared to all other employees in the organisation.

On 1 April 2025 there was a multiple of 5.88 between the base level salary of the Chief Executive and the lowest paid member of staff, reflecting the differences in skill sets, complexity and span of control from the lowest to the highest paid employees of the Council.

The salary (inclusive of allowances) for the post of Chief Executive was £147,594 (as at 1 April 2025).

The median full time equivalent salary for all other employees in Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council is in the region of £34,263, the mean full time equivalent salary is in the region of £40,367. The pay multiple is therefore approximately 4.17 against the median and 3.54 against the mean.

The Council's bespoke grading structure for employees with professional and specialised high level skill sets is entitled the "M" grade framework. All those referred to as chief officers within this pay policy statement fall within the "M grade" framework.

A feature of the M grade framework is that the remuneration levels for all M grade posts (including those of chief officers), are fixed as a percentage of the benchmark grade M2. Therefore, the grading structure specifies the pay multiples attached to each grade as a percentage of the lowest incremental point of grade M2.

Posts are positioned within the M grade framework on the basis of the required specialist knowledge, professional skills, depth of professional and managerial judgement, and managerial span of control. Broadly speaking the range of capabilities required for junior M grade posts (M9 – M7 inclusive) equate to professional and/or managerial capability equivalent to qualification Level 6.

Those occupying senior managerial posts graded M6 to M4 are required to possess both professional and managerial skill sets equivalent to Level 7.

There are two director level chief officer posts graded as M2a and a Head of Service Chief Officer post graded at M3 (wef 28 July 2025). The professional and managerial capabilities and span of control required at for these posts broadly equate to Level 8.

A Level 8 degree of professional and managerial expertise is also required for the post of the Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Executive. This, alongside the extensive span of control intrinsic to the role of paid head of service for the entire Council workforce, merits the grade of M1 for the Chief Executive and M2 for their deputy.



## **Supervisory, technical and clerical grades**

The council has developed a bespoke grading structure for its supervisory, technical and clerical staff that ranges from the grade of senior officer to clerical scale 1. Broadly speaking the managerial, professional and skill set required for posts graded Senior Officer equate to qualification Level 5, posts graded scale 5-6 equate to Level 4, posts graded scale 3-4 to Level 3, posts graded scale 1-2 require a Level 1-2 skill set.

The Council considers that the relationship between the base salaries of its highest and lowest paid employees, as well as the relationship between the highest paid and the mean and medial salaries of the entire workforce, represents an appropriate, fair and equitable internal pay relationship.

## **Section 5 – Policies common to all employees**

The following elements of remuneration are determined by corporate policies or arrangements which apply to all permanent employees of the Council (including its chief officers and deputy chief officers), regardless of their pay level, status or grading. Full details on any of the policies listed below can be provided on request.

The Council aims to have a streamlined and transparent pay structure and therefore it does not pay performance related or total contribution bonuses, location allowances, or subsidy towards child care costs.

Pension contributions for all employees opting to join the Local Government Pension Scheme are nationally determined.

### **Payments on termination of employment**

According to the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006 the Council has the power to make discretionary payments on early termination of employment.

The Council has determined that it will calculate payments made to any eligible employee (including chief officers) who are made redundant or who depart on the grounds of the efficiency of the service by using the Government's statutory redundancy payment calculator formula and the employee's actual weekly pay.

For those who depart on the grounds of redundancy or efficiency of the service, the Council does not increase the employee's total pension scheme membership (other than those staff aged over 55, in line with the rules of the Local Government Scheme) or award additional pension. This response to the Local Government Pension Scheme (Administration) Regulations 2008 applies to all employees, including chief and deputy chief officers.

For those who chose to retire “early”, the Council does not increase the employee’s total pension scheme membership or award additional pension.

The Council’s policy is that it does not re-employ anyone (including chief or deputy chief officers) who has left with a severance or redundancy payment, nor does it re-engage them on a self-employed basis with a contract for services.

### **Market Supplement Payments**

The Council introduced a Recruitment & Retention Market Supplement Policy in October 2023.

The Council may utilise a market supplement to ensure that competitive salaries will attract and retain key workers in skill shortage areas without distorting the pay structures for all other employees.

A market supplement for recruitment or retention purposes will only be used where there are clear business reasons that cannot be better addressed through the other means, such as job design, utilising existing skills within the department or service or use of temporary or agency staff for a time limited period.

It is recognised that pay is only one factor contributing to our attractiveness as an employer and other aspects of the employment offer, particularly those relating to development, should be applied in the first instance rather than using a market supplement.

### **Car allowances**

For those posts where it is deemed that there is an essential requirement for the post holder to use a car to perform their job, and they are expected to travel in excess of 2,500 miles per annum in the course of their duties, the post holder receives a lump sum Essential Car User allowance to contribute towards the associated running costs of the car in accordance with the rates previously set by the National Joint Council.

The Council previously had a lease car scheme which has not been open to new staff to join since June 2020. The lease car scheme is now no longer in operation as of November 2022 when the last remaining lease car holder ceased their participation in the scheme.

The Council no longer pays an equivalent payment as an alternative to a lease car but certain specific posts have been identified to receive a Car Allowance.

### **Telephone allowances**

Those employees who are deemed to be essential users of mobile telephones receive a mobile telephone allowance or a Council issued mobile phone.

### **Professional fees**

Annual professional subscription fees to one relevant professional body are reimbursed to those employees where it is deemed an essential requirement for the post holder to belong to a professional institute.

### **Reimbursement of removal/relocation costs on appointment and mortgage subsidy scheme**

The Council's relocation and mortgage subsidy schemes provide financial assistance (within pre-defined limits) to employees who re-locate from outside a reasonable travel area to the Borough to take up an appointment with the Council.

### **Subsistence Allowance**

The Council reimburses expenditure on meals, accommodation, and any other expenses necessarily (within pre-defined limits) incurred by employees who have to be away from home on Council business.

### **Standby and call out allowances**

Any employee who is required to undertake standby and call-out duties will be recompensed at the appropriate rate in accordance with the negotiated policy and payment rate for their role.

### **Long Service Awards**

Employees who retire, or leave due to redundancy, after 20 or more years of Local Government service, of which at least 10 must have been with Tonbridge and Malling, are eligible to receive a long service award as follows:

Years of Local Government Service	Award (£)
20-24	175.00
25-29	200.00
30-34	240.00
35-39	280.00
40-44	370
45 or more	410

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## General Purposes Committee

21 January 2026

### Part 1 - Public

#### Recommendation to Council



Cabinet Member	Not applicable
Responsible Officer	Damian Roberts, Chief Executive
Report Author	Mathew Brooks, Head of HR & Development

#### Pay Award 2026/2027

##### 1 Summary and Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides Members with information to recommend to Full Council, the Council's pay award for employees for 2026/27.

##### 2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

- 2.1 Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.
- 2.2 Ensuring that the Council's pay remain competitive with neighbouring Councils and those within the wider job market, should ensure that the Council can successfully recruit and retain staff with the appropriate skillset to deliver the Council's priorities, particularly during this period of uncertainty and disruption caused by Local Government Reorganisation

##### 3 Recommendations

- 3.1 To recommend to Council to apply a pay award of 4% to all salary scales with effect from 1 April 2026.

##### 4 Introduction and Background

- 4.1 All Council employees have a term in their contracts which reads "Salaries will be revised on 1 April each year by an amount determined by the Authority having regard to movements in the Retail Price Index, comparative pay settlements and prevailing economic conditions." This Council determines its own pay awards and is not tied into the national process of collective bargaining.
- 4.2 The last increase to employees' salaries was on 1 April 2025. The pay award was a 2.9% increase paid to all staff except for increasing the lowest pay rate to £12.60 per hour in line with the Real Living Wage rate for 2025/26. This meant

that spinal column point 315 was removed from scale 3 of the Council's pay scale. Salary scales 1 and 2 were formally removed from the Council's pay structure as they fell well below the National Living Wage. Unfortunately, one of the consequences of this has been to reduce the ability of the Council to bring in new employees into entry level jobs where the Council would have been able to provide support, training and valuable experience for employees at the very start of their careers.

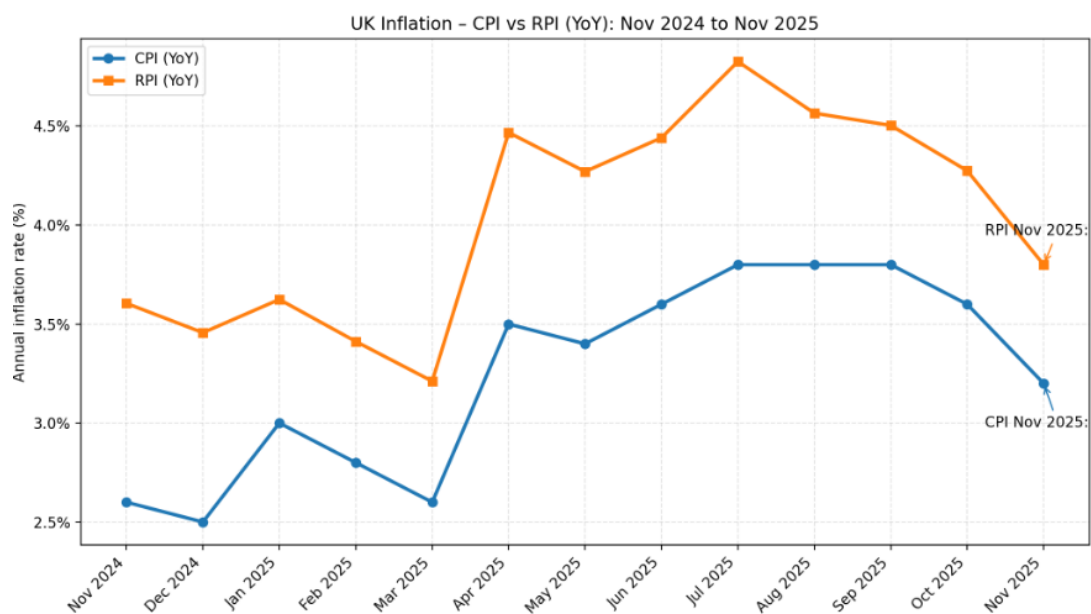
- 4.3 This report considers a range of factors that are relevant to the issue of a pay award for 2026/27 and provides Members with information to consider in determining the recommended pay award for employees.

## 5 Prevailing Economic Conditions

### 5.1 RPI and CPI Rates

- 5.2 The most recently published Retail Price Index (RPI) rate (in November 2025) was 3.8% and the Consumer Price Index (CPI) most recent published figure (in November 2025), was 3.2%.

- 5.3 As the chart below shows, over the past year RPI ended at 3.8%, tracking a modest downward trend after summer high of 4.8%, while CPI peaked at 3.8%



- 5.4 Members will be aware of the on-going need to make savings and transformation contributions in the context of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- 5.5 A key factor for Members to consider when determining this year's pay award is the forthcoming increase in the National Living Wage (NLW) from 1 April 2026. The Government has announced that the NLW will rise by 4.1% on 1 April 2026, moving from £12.21 to £12.71 per hour—an increase of £0.50 per hour.

- 5.6 The Council is legally required to ensure that no employee is paid below the NLW. Currently, the lowest pay rate at TMBC is for staff on scale 3, spinal column point 316, which equates to £12.60 per hour. Any pay award of 1% or more will ensure this rate remains above the new NLW threshold.
- 5.7 If no general pay award is agreed, the Council will still need to apply a pay increase of at least 1% to spinal column point 316 to comply with NLW requirements from 1 April 2026. Alternatively, staff on this grade would need to be moved to spinal column point 317 to avoid falling below the statutory minimum. (Annex 1 - Salary Scales TMBC 2025/26)
- 5.8 **Comparative Pay Settlements**
- 5.9 At the time of writing, no Kent Authority have settled their pay awards for 2026/27, and most are engaged in ongoing negotiations with rates of up to 4% being discussed.
- 5.10 There is no indication as yet of what the national pay award (NJC) offer for 2026/27 will be. The national pay award for 2025/26 was an increase of 3.2% applied to all pay grades compared with 2.9% agreed by this Council.
- 5.11 The below table shows the historic pay awards at TMBC since 2010/11 along and the average annual rate of CPI and RPI.

Financial Year	Pay Award	Average CPI (FY, %)	Average RPI (FY, %)
2010/11	0% (pay freeze)	3.5	5.0
2011/12	0% (pay freeze)	4.3	4.8
2012/13	0% (pay freeze)	2.7	3.1
2013/14	1%	2.3	2.9
2014/15	1%	1.1	2.0
2015/16	1%	0.1	1.1
2016/17	1% (part of 2% over 2 years)	1.1	2.1
2017/18	1% (part of 2% over 2 years)	2.8	3.8
2018/19	2%	2.3	3.1
2019/20	2.5%	1.7	2.7
2020/21	2.5%	0.6	1.1
2021/22	1%	4.0	5.8
2022/23	2%	10.0	12.9

2023/24	5%	5.7	7.6
2024/25	£1,900 (Scale 1–SO) and 5% (M grades)	2.4	3.3
2025/26	2.9% (all staff) and £12.60/hour lowest SCP	3.6	4.5
<b>Average %increase</b>	<b>1.7*</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>4.1</b>

\*based on a 5% pay award for 2024/25 and 2.9% for 2025/26

- 5.12 From 2010-2012 there were no pay awards and salaries remained “frozen” at the 2009 level. From 2013-2015 there were pay awards of 1%; an award of 2% over 2 years was made for the period April 2016 to March 2018.
- 5.13 The award for 2018/19 was 2%, for 2019/20 and 2020/21 the award was 2.5%, for 2021/22 it was 1% and for 2022/23 it was 2%. The pay award for 2023/24 was 5%. The pay award for 2024/25 was £1,900 for staff on scale 1 to SO and 5% for M grade staff.
- 5.14 The most recent pay award for 2025/26 was 2.9% to all staff and £12.60 per hour to the Council’s lowest spinal column point.

## 6 Recruitment and Retention Issues

- 6.1 Recruitment to M grade posts across the Council has become increasingly challenging in recent years, especially in disciplines requiring professional qualifications such as Planning, Legal, Engineering, Finance, and Surveyors. TMBC’s proximity to London, where salaries and benefits are often more attractive, has intensified competition for skilled professionals. In addition, the Council faces strong competition for talent across Kent and neighbouring counties, further limiting the pool of suitably qualified candidates and making it increasingly difficult to secure appointments to these critical roles.
- 6.2 The area of organisational development is an amber risk on the Strategic Risk Register presented to Audit Committee in September 2025, where it is considered that a lack of resources or correct skill sets could result in delays to deliver both required and desired outcomes. The potential for losing key staff to other authorities could have a detrimental effect on service delivery for the Council.
- 6.3 Several key M grade roles have remained vacant for extended periods or have only been filled after multiple unsuccessful recruitment rounds leading to significant capacity issues and disruption to operational delivery. For example, the Estates Surveyor (M8) post has been vacant since August 2022 and is currently covered by a more costly locum. Similarly, the Contracts & Procurement Lawyer (M6) has required repeated advertising and is again being covered by a locum since October 2022. The Principal Planner (Policy) (M7) and Engineering



Manager (M8) posts have also relied on temporary and costly arrangements due to persistent recruitment difficulties.

- 6.4 The Council relies on having highly skilled and motivated Officers, but in many cases, shortlists for M grade vacancies have been extremely limited, resulting in either no appointment or the need to appoint through agencies at significant additional cost. These challenges have led to delays in filling critical roles, increased reliance on agency staff, and additional strain on existing teams, all of which pose risks to service delivery and organisational resilience.
- 6.5 While these recruitment issues are most acute at the M grades, the Council remains committed to the retention and fair pay of all staff. Local Government Reorganisation adds further uncertainty, making it essential to maintain competitive pay and supportive working conditions to retain valued employees across the organisation.
- 6.6 A good pay award this year is essential to retain and recognise the value of our staff, ensuring the Council remains competitive and able to deliver high-quality services during this period of significant change.

## **7 Proposal**

- 7.1 The cost of living and Public Sector pay has continued to be a high-profile topic throughout 2025, as rates of inflation have increased overall during the last twelve months, the current rate of inflation suggests that a pay award is necessary.
- 7.2 **UNISON Pay Claim for 2026/27**
- 7.3 The trade union, UNISON, submitted their claim to the Chief Executive and the Director of Central Services & Deputy Chief Executive in November 2025. UNISON's pay claim for 2026/27 can be found in full, in Annex 2 of this report.
- 7.4 The main element of UNISON's pay claim for 2026/27 is to request a pay increase to all grades of 4.5% with allowances increasing by the same amount. In addition, UNISON have requested that the Council permanently adopts the Real Living Wage and to maintain pay differentials across the pay scale when raising the lowest grades to the Real Living Wage levels.
- 7.5 The Real Living Wage is due to rise to £13.45 per hour from 1 April 2026. This is an increase of 6.7%.
- 7.6 The cost of implementing UNISON's pay claim of a 4.5% pay rise is £628,650.
- 7.7 If the Council were minded to accept all elements of UNISON's claim i.e. a 4.5% pay award, adopt the Real Living Wage and maintain pay differentials across the pay scale when raising the lowest grades to the Real Living Wage levels, this will cost £942,450.

- 7.8 If the Council implemented the Real Living Wage during the next financial year (but did not maintain pay differentials), this would affect the Council's pay structure. Specifically, Scale 3 would fall below the minimum permissible rate of pay.
- 7.9 A consequence of this, all staff currently on spinal column points 316 and 317 would need to move up to Scale 4. Consequently, to maintain appropriate pay differentials, staff on the first two spinal column points of Scale 4 would also need to be moved up.
- 7.10 The cost of adjusting pay for lower-graded roles to align with the Real Living Wage from 1 April 2026 is £54,469.
- 7.11 **Issues to Consider**
- 7.12 If the Council adopted the Real Living Wage and maintained pay differentials as an ongoing policy position then this approach carries significant financial implications.
- 7.13 If adopted, future pay decisions at TMBC would effectively be driven by national increases in the Real Living Wage, which are likely to exceed the pay awards typically considered locally. This would reduce the Council's ability to manage pay progression independently and could result in significant escalating costs over time.
- 7.14 Adopting the Real Living Wage and maintaining pay differentials as a formal policy introduces a material financial risk for the Council in future years.
- 7.15 Adopting the Real Living Wage presents significant challenges for the Council, principally due to the lack of autonomy over the budget-setting process. This limitation means that any additional costs arising from pay adjustments cannot be easily absorbed or reallocated within existing budgets.
- 7.16 The requirement to increase salaries for lower-graded roles, and the subsequent knock-on effect on pay differentials across scales, leads to upward pay pressure on all grades and as a result, substantial financial implications year-on-year. This is because it is vital that the Council is able to maintain clear differentials between grades so that pay remains fair and linked to the skills, knowledge and experience necessary for the effective delivery of each role.
- 7.17 These differentials also have an important role in underpinning career progression, an essential factor in the Council's approach to developing, motivating and retaining its staff. Without the ability to manage these costs proactively, the Council faces increased pressure on its resources, which may impact service delivery and overall financial sustainability.
- 7.18 An overriding imperative for the Council is to contain its expenditure on salaries in order to retain a stable employment position that, in turn, will be to the overall

benefit of staff, continue the delivery of good quality services, and help to achieve a balanced budget. Maintaining our ability to recruit, retain and motivate staff with the appropriate skill sets to meet the Council's priorities and future challenges ahead is also of vital importance.

- 7.19 Provision for pay inflation for 2026/27 has been made at 4% in the draft Revenue Estimates for 2026/27 (being presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 January 2026) this equates to an increase of £558,800 against the base staffing establishment.
- 7.20 The determination of a pay award for 2026/27 is driven by two key factors, the need to maintain the Council's ability to recruit and retain staff in a highly competitive environment and at a particularly challenging time, and the need for a pay award that recognises the contribution of all staff in the Council.
- 7.21 After carefully taking everything into account, I recommend that a 4% pay award to staff for 2026/27.

## **8 Conclusion**

- 8.1 Implementing a 4% pay award will support for the Council's efforts to tackle acute recruitment and retention challenges, especially at M grade and other hard-to-fill posts across the Council.
- 8.2 With this proposed increase, the lowest pay grade will rise to £13.10 per hour, positioning the Council comfortably above the new National Living Wage (with effect from 1 April 2026) of £12.71 and strengthening its competitiveness in attracting and retaining staff.
- 8.3 Such an award clearly demonstrates the Council's commitment to valuing its workforce and offers a compelling incentive for both staff retention and prospective employees to choose TMBC, helping to secure the skills and experience needed to maintain high-quality services.

## **9 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 9.1 A flat rate 4% pay award to all staff, would cost £558,800 and is currently included in the draft estimates and MTFS being prepared for Member consideration.
- 9.2 Members allowances will also rise in-line with the agreed percentage of the staff pay award. A 4% rise to Member allowances would cost £17,150 and has been included in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee papers.

## **10 Risk Assessment**

- 10.1 The Council will need to continue to closely monitor movements in pay awards in future years not only amongst neighbouring authorities but also in the private

sector as there is a risk that some staff, whom it may be in the Council's interest to retain for the future, may be attracted to the potentially higher rewards elsewhere.

- 10.2 The Council lists recruitment and retention issues on the Strategic Risk register making it one of the top 10 Risks facing the Council. If a below inflation pay award is given to staff this could increase the level of risk to the Council.

## **11 Legal Implications**

- 11.1 The Council has a contractual requirement to review our salary levels annually but no obligation to increase them by any set amount or in response to movement in either the RPI or the CPI.

## **12 Consultation and Communications**

- 12.1 The Council has actively engaged with colleagues from UNISON and has considered their proposal for the 2026/27 pay award.
- 12.2 The Council does not require formal agreement through consultation with either UNISON or any other trade union in order to determine its pay award.

## **13 Implementation**

- 13.1 Subject to approval by Council on 24 February 2026, the pay award will be implemented on 1 April 2026.

## **14 Cross Cutting Issues**

### **14.1 Climate Change and Biodiversity**

- 14.1.1 A moderate source of emissions is likely to be maintained at current levels or increased.
- 14.1.2 Climate change advice has not been sought in the preparation of the options and recommendations in this report.

### **14.2 Equalities and Diversity**

- 14.2.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

### **14.3 Other If Relevant**

- Human Resources
- Business Continuity / Resilience

- 14.3.1 Human Resources - Pay Policy statement.

14.3.2 Business Continuity / Resilience - a pay award of 4% is being recommended to ensure that pay remain competitive both with neighbouring Councils and the wider job market to ensure the Council can successfully recruit and retain staff with the appropriate skillset to deliver the Council's priorities

Background Papers	None
Annexes	Annex 1 – TMBC 2025/2026 salary scales Annex 2 – UNISON pay claim for 2026/27

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**TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL  
FULL TIME SALARIES**

LOCAL FROM 01.04.25		
Scale		£
3	<b>316</b>	24,303
	<b>317</b>	24,750
4	318	25,206
	319	26,103
	320	27,003
	321	27,948
5	322	28,629
	323	29,430
	324	30,333
	325	31,257
6	326	32,205
	327	33,216
	328	34,263
SO	329	35,553
	330	36,681
	331	37,800
	332	38,844
	333	39,957
	334	41,067

TMBC GRADES	
	scp
3	316 to 317
4	318 to 321
5	322 to 325
6	326 to 328
SO	329 to 334

PROTECTED SCALES	
Scale	Protected scp
3	318 to 319
4	322 to 323
5	326 to 327
6	329 to 330

First Aid Allowance	
2025/26	£204.00

Years of LG Service	Long Service Award
20-24	175
25-29	200
30-34	240
35-39	280
40-44	370
45 or more	410

M GRADE FROM 01.04.25			
			£
M9	<b>41.0%</b>	111	41,766
		112	42,603
		113	43,440
		114	44,277
		115	45,120
		116	45,966
		117	46,803
M8	<b>46.0%</b>	121	49,677
		122	50,622
		123	51,573
		124	52,509
M7	<b>51.0%</b>	131	55,077
		132	56,124
		133	57,177
		134	58,215
M6	<b>56.0%</b>	141	60,477
		142	61,626
		143	62,784
		144	63,924
M5	<b>61.00%</b>	147	65,874
		148	67,128
		149	68,388
		150	69,630
M4	<b>70.0%</b>	151	75,702
		152	77,133
		153	78,582
		154	80,007
M4a	<b>75.0%</b>	161	81,102
		162	82,635
		163	84,183
		164	85,716
M3	<b>80.4%</b>	171	86,925
		172	88,575
		173	90,237
		174	91,875
M3a	<b>85.0%</b>	176	91,899
		177	93,639
		178	95,394
		179	97,128
M2a	<b>97.5%</b>	181	105,393
		182	107,394
		183	109,407
		184	111,396
M2	<b>100.0%</b>	186	108,093
		187	110,145
		188	112,209
		189	114,249
M1	<b>125.0%</b>	191	135,090
		192	137,655
		193	140,235
		194	142,782

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### **Pay Claim for 2026/2027**

Submitted by the Tonbridge and Malling Branch of UNISON  
to Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

#### **1. Introduction**

This pay claim is made on behalf of all UNISON members employed at Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC).

Our members have consistently shown commitment and dedication in delivering essential services to residents, often under conditions of high workload, recruitment challenges and increasing financial pressures.

Despite recent pay awards, pay has rarely kept pace with inflation over the past decade, leaving staff significantly worse off in real terms. The cumulative erosion of pay compared with the Retail Price Index has exceeded 30% over the last decade [1]. While the inflation rate has fallen back since the highest peaks, it has risen once again this year.

The 2026/2027 pay claim reflects:

- The continuing cost of living pressures faced by our members and their families.
- The need to maintain fair and competitive pay to retain skilled staff and recruit into hard-to-fill posts.

Appropriate reward is needed to sustain the morale and productivity of staff in their crucial role of delivering high quality services.

## 2. Summary of Claim

UNISON is seeking the following from TMBC:

- **A 4.5% increase on all salary points and allowances.**
- **Permanent adoption of the Real Living Wage (RLW)**, with the Council seeking **accreditation** as a Living Wage Employer.
- A clear commitment to **maintain pay differentials** across the pay scale when raising the lowest grades to RLW levels.

The background and justification for this claim is detailed within the following sections.

## 3. Pay Award 2025/2026

The Council's pay award for April 2024 provided a 2.9% increase across all grades, except for the lowest spinal column point, which was uplifted to align with the Real Living Wage equivalent of £12.60 per hour.

While this adjustment was welcomed for ensuring that the lowest-paid employees received the Real Living Wage, it was **disappointing** that the remainder of staff saw their proposed increase **reduced by 0.1%** to offset the modest £14,000 cost of implementing this change, particularly given that TMBC remains in a **relatively strong financial position**.

It was also regrettable that the Council did not consider formally adopting the Real Living Wage as part of its ongoing pay policy.

Only 50% of UNISON members voted to accept this pay award, with the remaining **50% wanting us to decline the offer**. This outcome underlines the importance of ensuring that this year's pay offer genuinely addresses members' concerns and delivers a meaningful, material benefit for all employees.

#### 4. Economic & Public Sector Context

Public sector pay awards across the UK in 2024/25 were in the range of **4.75% to 6%**, with an average of **5.7%** [2]. Despite these pay awards, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) notes that public sector pay has fallen behind the private sector in recent years, eroding recruitment competitiveness [3].

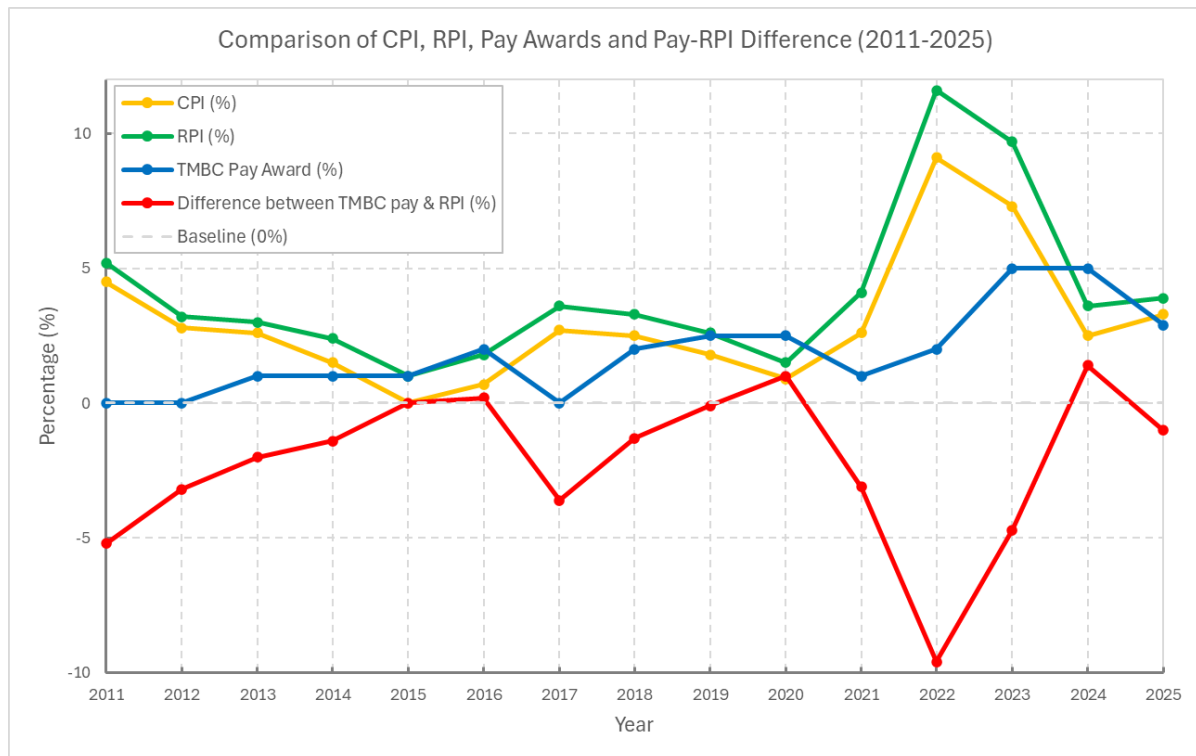
TMBC's pay awards have historically lagged behind inflation almost every year, over many years, leading to a **cumulative decline in the value of TMBC earnings** and a **fall in living standards** suffered by staff. Recent years have seen the steepest rises in the cost of living facing workers in over 40 years, being 11.6% in 2022 and 9.7% in 2023 [17]. Table 1 and Chart 1 illustrate the trends of TMBC pay awards.

*Table 1: Comparison of TMBC pay awards vs cost of living (2011-2024) [17]*

2011	CPI%	RPI%	TMBC Pay Award %	Difference between TMBC pay & RPI %
2011	4.5	5.2	0	-5.2
2012	2.8	3.2	0	-3.2
2013	2.6	3.0	1	-2.0
2014	1.5	2.4	1	-1.4
2015	0	1.0	1	0
2016	0.7	1.8	2	+0.2
2017	2.7	3.6	0	-3.6
2018	2.5	3.3	2	-1.3
2019	1.8	2.6	2.5	-0.1
2020	0.9	1.5	2.5	+1.0
2021	2.6	4.1	1	-3.1
2022	9.1	11.6	2	-9.6
2023	7.3	9.7	5	-4.7
2024	2.5	3.6	£1,900 up to SO 5% for M grade	(Varies per grade) +1.4 (M grade)
2025	3.3	3.9	2.9% Lowest spinal column increased to align with the Real Living Wage equivalent to £12.60 per hour	-1
Cumulative Total				-32.6

Chart 1: Comparison of TMBC pay awards vs cost of living (2011-2024) [17]

## Annex 2



This means that, while a wage keeping pace with the cost of living each year would have risen by 60.5% since 2011, pay at TMBC has risen by just 27.9%, resulting in **the value of staff wages falling by 32.6%**, which represents a drop worth thousands of pounds. This pay erosion affects everyone, but is most felt by those who have previously reached the top of their grade, who will not receive any further pay increments.

Inflation has moderated from the double-digit peaks of 2022–23, however the Retail Price Index (RPI, which is the most realistic measure of inflation (because it includes housing costs), is still running at 4.5% (in September 2025), with many core expenditures showing much higher surges [18]:

- Water charges up 26.1%
- Gas charges up 13.3%
- Electricity charges up 8%
- Phone services up 7.8%
- Mortgage interest payments up 7.7%
- Rail fares up 7.6%
- Bus/coach fares up 7.3%
- Food prices up 5.9%
- Rent up 5.7%
- Council tax / rates up 5.4%
- Nursery charges up 5%

It should also be noted that:

- The ONS reports that food and non-alcoholic drink prices rose by **30% between 2021 and 2023** [1].
- Ofgem's latest data confirms that domestic energy bills are still **~50% higher than in 2021**, even after recent reductions in the price cap [4].
- The Coram Childcare Survey (2024) shows that childcare costs in the UK have risen **over 5% year-on-year**, leaving the UK with some of the **highest childcare costs in the OECD** [5].

Furthermore, the last decade and a half has seen enormous jumps in the basic costs shown below [19].

Expenditure Item	House Prices	Bus & Coach Fares	Electricity	Gas
Price rise 2010 – 24	73%	93%	144%	92%

For the value of staff wages not to fall back even further, they must at least keep pace with rises in the cost of living. In light of the above economic and public sector context, without a fair increase, **TMBC risks losing staff** to better-paying councils and private employers in Kent and beyond, especially given that **average earnings continue to grow at an average of 4.7%** across the economy [20]

Our 2025 survey of UNISON members revealed that **7 people were struggling financially, with 6 of those even struggling to pay their utility bills**. Respondents gave examples of cutting back on social and leisure activities, including exercise necessary for their wellbeing, along with adjusting food shopping habits and cutting back on treats for children. Overall, the trend indicates a strong shift away from non-essential spending, **impacting social experiences and family life**.

## 5. Recruitment, Retention & Pay Competition

Recruitment and retention remain ongoing challenges across local government, and TMBC is no exception.

- **National evidence:** ONS figures show that public sector vacancies remain higher than pre-pandemic levels, with local government facing particular difficulties filling professional and technical roles [1].
- **Pay competition:** CIPD research found that average pay settlements across the UK economy are running at around **4–5%**, with Southeast employers often having to pay even higher to secure talent in a competitive job market [6]. This is because being **close to London** offers the opportunity for many people in our area to earn a higher salary with London weighting, which has been accelerated with the recent trend of many jobs now being available to work from home, with a short commute to London for ‘in office’ days.
- **Local government reports:** The Local Government Association (LGA) has highlighted “**critical staff shortages**” in planning, environmental health, legal, and housing across councils nationwide [7].
- **Retention pressures:** UNISON’s national survey of local government workers found that **over half had considered leaving their jobs in the past year due to pay and workload pressures** [7].

Without competitive pay, TMBC will likely suffer from:

- Losing experienced staff to neighbouring councils or the private sector.
- Increasing reliance on costly agency staff and market supplements to fill gaps.
- Reduced morale among remaining staff, who face higher workloads and increased pressure when vacancies remain unfilled.

## 6. Workload Pressures

Staff across the Council have been facing sustained and increasing workload pressures. Our 2025 UNISON pay survey revealed that **87% of respondents reported an increase in workload** over the past year.

It appears that service demands continue to grow while staffing levels remain the same or have reduced.

This imbalance between expectations and capacity is unsustainable. These pressures could contribute to stress, fatigue, falling morale, and the potential for increased sickness absence, higher staff turnover, and declining service standards. It poses a long-term **threat to the Council's ability to maintain consistent, high-quality services**.

Our members deserve to be compensated for these additional pressures.

## 7. Justification for a 4.5% reasonable pay rise

The majority of our members initially called for a **5% increase**. However, after careful consideration, we have moderated this claim to **4.5%**.

This figure is reasonable because:

- It is **below the average public sector settlement in 2024/25 (5.7%)** [2], demonstrating restraint.
- It is **in line with current inflation (RPI)** and slightly above future inflation forecasts, ensuring staff do not lose further ground in real terms [2].
- The Council is in a relatively healthy financial position.
- It strikes a balance between affordability for the Council and fairness for staff, recognising the financial pressures on both.

By setting our claim at 4.5%, we are deliberately asking for less than the national norm, positioning TMBC as **fair but not excessive**.



## 8. The Hidden Cost of Not Acting

If TMBC fails to invest in staff pay, this will result in the issues identified above, which may create costs elsewhere, with the potential to impact the council's budgets:

- **Recruitment costs:** The LGA estimates the average cost of replacing a council employee (including advertising, HR time, and onboarding) can exceed **£6,000 per role** [7].
- **Agency staff:** Councils often pay **30–40% more per hour** for temporary staff than permanent employees [7].
- **Productivity & morale:** High turnover leads to disrupted service delivery, loss of institutional knowledge, and increased pressure on remaining staff, which has financial implications.

In practice, ***paying staff fairly is often cheaper than the issues that arise as a result of being an employer that pays less.***

A modest investment in pay today will save the Council money tomorrow by reducing recruitment churn, reliance on agency cover, and the risk of service shortfalls.



## 9. The Real Living Wage – A Chance for TMBC to Lead Locally

The **National Living Wage** (set by government) is currently £12.21 [8] and is expected to rise to **£12.71** from April 2026.

The **Real Living Wage (RLW)**, which is independently calculated by the Living Wage Foundation, is currently £12.60 and set to rise to **£13.45** for 2026/27, with those in London earning £14.80 [9].

The Real Living Wage has become a standard benchmark for the minimum needed for low-paid staff to have a **“basic but acceptable” standard of living**.

There are now over 16,000 employers accredited as Real Living Wage employers by the Living Wage Foundation, including half of the largest companies listed on the UK Stock Exchange and household names such as Aviva, Barclays, HSBC, Nationwide, Google and IKEA are among them.

The precedent of the Real Living Wage, in tandem with recruitment and retention pressures, has also pushed major employers of low-paid staff in the retail sector to increase pay. Sainsbury's and Argos workers received a rise from £12 to £12.45 per hour in March 2025 before a further increase to £12.60 in August. Tesco followed suit, taking employees from £12.02 to £12.45 in March, then £12.64 in August, with London workers going to £14.36 per hour. Lidl and Aldi have also pushed rates for customer service roles in stores to up to £14 an hour. Similarly, Amazon raised its rate for frontline operations staff to between £13.50 and £14.50 per hour, depending on location, toward the end of 2024.

**TMBC is competing in a labour market where the Real Living Wage has become an increasingly common starting point for other employers.**

Within the public sector, the Real Living Wage has now long been set as the minimum pay rate across all Scotland's public sector organisations, and this was extended to social care workers in Scotland's private and voluntary sector from October 2016.

**Kent County Council** states in its Pay Policy Statement that its *lowest grade is set “marginally above the equivalent of the Living Wage Foundation's Real Living Wage”* [10]. While this is a good initial step, this is not the same as full accreditation, nor does it extend to all staff or contractors.

TMBC is in a similar situation, as the Council is currently paying an equivalent to the RLW following last year's pay award, however, has **not formally adopted the Real Living Wage for the future**.

No other borough or district council in Kent is currently an accredited Real Living Wage employer [9]. This presents TMBC with a clear **opportunity to lead the way locally**:

- **By adopting the RLW permanently and seeking accreditation, TMBC could be the first Borough council in Kent** to take this step.
- Several Parish Councils in Kent are already Real Living Wage employers, including Kings Hill Parish Council and two Parish Council's in Ashford [11].
- **Accreditation** would not only benefit the lowest-paid staff, but also send a strong signal to the local community and our contractors that TMBC values fairness, equality, and staff wellbeing.
- A study of 2,000 workers conducted by the Living Wage Foundation in 2025 found that 75% of staff on the Real Living Wage believe that their work has a positive impact on their job satisfaction compared to 61% of low-paid staff [14].
- Notwithstanding the above morale points, there would also be economic benefits to TMBC from adopting the RLW. Around 40% of employers who have become accredited Real Living Wage employers have seen major or moderate **improvements to recruitment and retention** [12].
- When introduced by KPMG among its facilities management contract provided by ISS, the policy led to a 40% drop in turnover [13].
- KPMG has stated that their spend on hiring was cut so dramatically that they saved £75,000 in the first year of paying the Real Living Wage [13].
- A study of 2,000 workers conducted by the Living Wage Foundation in 2025 found that 65% of low paid were more likely to stay if their employer offered a Real Living Wage, while 75% stated that they were more likely to leave if another employer offered a Real Living Wage [14]
- Various studies have demonstrated improved productivity and reduced sickness absence [13].
- Around 86% of employers that have introduced the Real Living Wage have reported reputational benefits through increased consumer awareness of their commitment to being an ethical employer [15].
- Employers are competing for staff in a labour market where the RLW is an increasingly common starting wage, especially in the public sector, therefore offering this will provide enhance competitiveness [13].

Councils elsewhere (including Cambridge, Sunderland, South Swindon Parish, and Chiseldon Parish) have already demonstrated that RLW adoption is practical, affordable, and beneficial [9]. There is therefore no justifiable reason why TMBC should not adopt the RLW.

## 10. Conclusion

There can be no doubt that all TMBC staff have seen the value of their earnings fall considerably over recent years.

We are seeking a **4.5% pay increase**, despite our members asking for a 5% increase, because we understand and appreciate the budget constraints faced by TMBC. We believe this pay claim is however fair, realistic, and essential for sustaining service delivery at TMBC.

We further call for the **permanent adoption of the Real Living Wage - with accreditation** - to demonstrate TMBC's commitment to fair pay and to seize the chance to lead locally.

By investing in staff pay now, TMBC will reduce turnover, improve morale, and strengthen recruitment – ultimately safeguarding the high-quality services our residents expect.

**Submitted on behalf of UNISON members**

**Carolyn Mell**

**Jack Lee**

**Andrew Longman**

**Branch Chair**

**Membership Officer**

**Treasurer**

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## General Purposes Committee

21 January 2026

### Part 1 - Public

#### Delegated



Cabinet Member	Not Applicable
Responsible Officer	Adrian Stanfield, Director of Central Services & Deputy Chief Executive
Report Author	Mathew Brooks, Head of HR & Development

## Member Development Strategy 2026 - 2028

### 1 Summary and Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The aim of implementing a new Member Development Strategy is to set out how Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council will support and develop its Members to ensure the successful delivery of its strategic priorities.

### 2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

- 2.1 Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.
- 2.2 A Member Development Strategy will ensure the Council's Members are well-informed, confident in their decision-making roles, and equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to contribute to the effective governance and delivery of council services.

### 3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Approve the draft of the new Member Development Strategy 2026-2028 set out at Annex 1.

### 4 Introduction and Background

- 4.1 The development of a comprehensive Member Development Strategy is a stated priority within the Council's Annual Service Delivery Plan for 2025/26, reflecting the importance of equipping Members with the knowledge and skills required to fulfil their roles effectively.
- 4.2 The General Purposes Committee agreed at its meeting in October 2025 that the Strategy:

- Should be Member-led and responsive to both individual and collective development needs.
- Should be flexible in delivery to accommodate time constraints and existing pressures on Members.
- Should be focused on both foundational knowledge and emerging priorities.

4.3 The Committee also agreed that a Member survey should take place, seeking Members' views on the content of the Member Development Strategy. A survey was sent to all Members in December 2025.

## **5 Proposal**

- 5.1 Following the results of the Member Development survey, which received 25 responses, a draft Member Development Strategy has been produced (Annex 1).
- 5.2 The survey indicated that the vast majority of Members (96% of respondents) feel confident or very confident in their roles.
- 5.3 The findings of the survey also highlight the importance of adopting a flexible approach to the delivery of Learning & Development activities. Members expressed no overall preference for a single approach in respect of the format of training, with support for training to be delivered in a variety of formats e.g. bitesize sessions in person (28% of respondents), online learning (33%), and dedicated training sessions both in the evening (26%) and during the day (6%).
- 5.4 This flexibility will help accommodate Members' differing schedules, learning preferences, and commitments, ensuring that all Members have the opportunity to participate and benefit fully from these activities.
- 5.5 Based on the feedback received through the Member Development survey, the following priority areas have been identified to guide the Member Development Strategy and ensure it aligns with Members' expressed needs and preferences.
- 5.6 The overarching aim of the Member Development Strategy is focused on five key priority areas.

### **1. Legislative and Governance**

Ensuring Members have the knowledge and skills to uphold statutory responsibilities, lead effective meetings, and maintain ethical standards.

### **2. Specialist / Council-Specific Training**

Building expertise in critical service areas such as housing, waste management, property strategy, and procurement to support informed decision-making.



### **3. Finance and Governance**

Enhancing financial literacy and resilience through training on budget management, audit processes, risk management, and medium-term financial planning.

### **4. Compliance Training**

Regular updates to Compliance training will ensure Members are aware of legal obligations and can protect the wellbeing of the community.

### **5. Local Government Reorganisation**

Preparing the Council for structural changes by equipping Members with the skills to manage transition, understand new governance frameworks, and communicate effectively with residents.

- 5.7 Together, these priorities should help ensure that Members are well-equipped to fulfil their roles effectively, adapt to future challenges, and continue to serve the Council and community to the highest standard.

## **6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 6.1 Where the council has in-house skills and capability to deliver learning and development sessions, these will be delivered within existing resources.
- 6.2 When costs are incurred, these costs will be met from the Council's corporate training budget, which is allocated for both staff and Member development.
- 6.3 This budget is set at £120,000 per annum for the financial years 2026/2027 and 2027/2028, ensuring sufficient provision for development opportunities.

## **7 Risk Assessment**

- 7.1 There is a risk that insufficient participation in Learning and Development activities could limit the strategy's effectiveness. To mitigate this, it will be important to ensure that the strategy emphasises flexible delivery and ongoing communication to encourage involvement.

## **8 Legal Implications**

- 8.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. However, the implementation of a member development strategy will ensure members are trained on the legal obligations placed upon them in undertaking their role and discharging the functions of the Council.

## **9 Consultation and Communications**

- 9.1 All Members were invited to contribute their views and identify their development needs through an all-Member survey.

## **10 Implementation**

- 10.1 Member Development will be monitored annually by the General Purposes Committee.
- 10.2 Members of the General Purposes Committee will be asked to agree the priority areas for the 2026/27 financial year at its next meeting in March 2026.

## **11 Cross Cutting Issues**

### **11.1 Climate Change and Biodiversity**

- 11.1.1 Adaptation and resilience have been considered.
- 11.1.2 Climate change advice has not been sought in the preparation of the options and recommendations in this report.

### **11.2 Equalities and Diversity**

- 11.2.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

### **11.3 Other If Relevant**

- Business Continuity / Resilience
- Health and Safety

Background Papers	Report to General Purposes Committee dated 8 October 2025
Annexes	Annex 1 - Draft Member Development Strategy 2026-2028

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# Member Development Strategy 2026-2028

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# Contents

- 01 Purpose
- 02 Vision and Values
- 03 Aims
- 04 Governance of the Strategy
- 05 Identifying Member Development Needs and Training Delivery
- 06 Role of the General Purposes Committee
- 07 Induction
- 08 Resourcing and Monitoring

### 1. Purpose

#### Purpose of the Member Development Strategy

This Member Development Strategy provides an effective framework for Councillor development at Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council. It sets out the guiding principles and key objectives that shape the approach to delivering effective and impactful Member learning and development.

This Member Development Strategy establishes formal mechanisms to plan, review and monitor councillor development on an ongoing basis.

### 2. Vision and Values

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (TMBC) is committed to supporting its elected Members as community leaders, policy makers, and advocates for residents.

#### Our Vision

The Council's Corporate Strategy 2023–2027 sets out our vision to be an innovative and forward-thinking council, leading the borough towards a vibrant, prosperous, and sustainable future.

Member development is essential to delivering the four key priorities of the Corporate Strategy.

#### Our Key Priorities

1. Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council
2. Sustaining a borough which cares for the environment
3. Improving housing options for local people whilst protecting our outdoor areas of importance
4. Investing in our local economy to help support residents and businesses and foster sustainable growth

#### Our Values

- **Innovation:** Embracing new ideas and technology and proactively finding solutions that improve our services to residents.
- **Transformation:** Adapting so we can meet the standards residents, businesses, and all those involved with the borough council rightly expect.
- **Delivery:** Ensuring we set ambitious targets that we strive to meet, in order to provide high-quality public services for our residents.

### 3. Aims

This strategy ensures TMBC Members have access to high-quality learning and development, enabling them to fulfil their roles in line with the Corporate Strategy.

Our aims are to:

- Ensure all newly elected Members are properly inducted to the Council
- Equip Members with the skills and knowledge to deliver the Council's priorities
- Ensure compliance with mandatory training
- Support development for all Members
- Deliver effective training that provides value for money
- Provide learning and development opportunities at different times and in different ways to ensure equality of opportunity

### 4. Governance of the Strategy

To provide high quality learning and development for Members, development needs must be assessed, reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis to ensure the needs of Councillors are understood.

It is important that Members are fully engaged in the management of the development programme, alongside officers.

The General Purposes Committee are responsible for approving the programme of Member development each year to ensure that it is responsive to Member needs. Annually, the Committee will:

- Evaluate the implementation of the previous year's development programme.
- Assess feedback via anonymous Member evaluation forms.
- Consider all councillor survey results.
- Review all feedback that is received in respect of Member Development.
- Agree areas for improvement.

### 5. Identifying Member Development Needs and Training Delivery

Member development needs will be identified as follows:

#### **Identifying Corporate Training Needs**

Local government is constantly evolving due to legal changes, policy updates, and shifts in corporate priorities. The Council must be alert to these changes and provide Member training, briefings and workshops that reflect such developments.

#### **Specialist Role Needs**

Some councillors take on specific responsibilities that require additional support.

These include:

- Chairs or Vice-Chairs of Committees
- Leadership, for example Leader of the Council or Leader of an Opposition Group
- Portfolio Holders
- Members sitting on Regulatory Committees such as Licensing and Planning Committees
- Scrutiny Members
- Audit and Standards Members
- Ceremonial and civic events

### **Learning and Development for all Members**

The priority areas for all Member learning and development have been shaped by two key processes: the priorities agreed by Members of the General Purposes Committee in October 2025 and the findings of a comprehensive Member Development Survey conducted in December 2025.

These initiatives have informed a targeted approach designed to strengthen governance, compliance, financial resilience, and operational effectiveness across the Council. The resulting framework focuses on five core areas, each critical to supporting effective decision-making and delivering high standards of public service.

#### **1. Legislative and Governance**

Ensuring Members have the knowledge and skills to uphold statutory responsibilities, lead effective meetings, and maintain ethical standards.

There will be a focus on the following key areas:

- Continued mandatory training for Licensing and Planning Committees
- Chairing Effective Meetings (for Chairs, Vice Chairs, and aspiring leaders)
- Role and function of Scrutiny and the Scrutiny Committee
- Understanding the Audit Function and the role of the Audit Committee
- Code of Conduct and ethical standards

#### **2. Specialist / Council-Specific Training**

Building expertise in critical service areas such as housing, waste management, property strategy, and procurement to support informed decision-making.

There will be a focus on the following key areas:

- Housing services and the Council's role
- Waste services and the waste contract

- Property function and its strategic importance
- Contracts and procurement, including high-value contracts

### **3. Finance and Governance**

Enhancing financial literacy and resilience through training on budget management, audit processes, risk management, and medium-term financial planning.

There will be a focus on the following key areas:

- Understanding the Statement of Accounts
- Internal and external audit processes
- What constitutes a balanced budget
- Regular updates on financial governance
- Risk Management and Financial Resilience
- Medium-Term Financial Planning and Forecasting

### **4. Compliance Training**

Regular updates to Compliance training will ensure Members are aware of legal obligations and can protect the wellbeing of the community.

There will be a focus on the following key areas:

- Equality & Diversity
- Safeguarding Children and Adults
- PREVENT
- Data Protection
- Cyber Security
- Climate Change
- Corporate Health & Safety

### **5. Local Government Reorganisation**

Preparing the Council for structural changes by equipping Members with the skills to manage transition, understand new governance frameworks, and communicate effectively with residents.

There will be a focus on the following key areas:

- Understanding the impact of reorganisation on Council structure and decision-making
- Roles and responsibilities in the new governance framework
- Managing change and supporting staff through transition
- Financial implications of reorganisation
- Communication and engagement with residents during change

### **Training Delivery**

To support Member development, training will be delivered through a variety of accessible and



engaging methods. Depending on the training need, sessions will be delivered through the Council's own internal resources or, where appropriate, expert training providers will be brought in.

To ensure as many Members as possible can attend training, a general development programme will be shared with all Members at the beginning of the new financial year.

Any further ad hoc training sessions that are required during the year will be channelled through the Democratic Services team to minimise clashes with other Member events.

Members will also be made aware of what training is mandatory and optional on receipt of the general development programme.

Potential development delivery methods may include:

- Briefings and workshops before committee meetings
- External conferences and seminars (in-person and via Teams/ Zoom etc), including those delivered by the Local Government Association
- Written materials
- E-Learning packages
- Sharing of knowledge between Members – shadowing and mentoring opportunities
- Establish a Member SharePoint resource library so all training material is readily accessible in a single place

## **6. Role of the General Purposes Committee**

The Member Development Strategy is owned by the Council. However, it will be the responsibility of the General Purposes Committee supported by the Human Resources and Development team to ensure that the Strategy is reviewed and updated to incorporate any changes in best practice and that it continues to be fit for purpose.

### **Roles and Composition**

The General Purposes Committee will review on an annual basis, the previous year's training feedback and consider the proposed development programme for the year ahead.

The General Purposes Committee will:

- Agree a draft Member Development Programme annually
- Identify needs and develop suitable learning opportunities
- Assess the effectiveness of training to ensure that training is delivered to a high standard and offers value for money
- Ensure that councillors have the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out their community leadership roles effectively

- Ensure equal access for all Councillors to learning and development opportunities
- Review attendance statistics and champion and promote learning and development among Members

## 7. Induction

The Member Development Strategy recognises a distinction between an induction for new Members and a general development programme.

Therefore, the following specific support will be offered to new councillors:

- Any new Councillor will be provided with an Induction Pack providing a comprehensive onboarding process to the Council and practical information about being a Councillor.
- An Induction Programme and existing calendar of meetings will be provided to prospective candidates to ensure that newly-elected Councillors are already aware of training and meeting commitments required. This will assist newly elected Members in participating fully in the business of the Council as soon as possible.
- Members will be invited to meet senior officers, find out about the Council's corporate plan and service areas and given information to get them started.
- Contact details of Democratic Services will be provided to support new Members with signposting and general orientation.

## 8. Resourcing and Monitoring

### Training Delivery and Funding

Training will primarily be delivered internally, making use of existing resources such as the Council's e-learning platform and in-house expertise. Where possible, external training will be accessed free of charge, for example through the Local Government Association (LGA) or other sector partners.

When training incurs costs, these costs will be met from the Council's corporate training budget, which is allocated for both staff and Member development. This budget is set at £120,000 per annum for the financial years 2026/2027 and 2027/2028, ensuring sufficient provision for high-quality development opportunities.

### Learning and Development Monitoring

Member Development will be monitored annually by the General Purposes Committee and the following will be reviewed annually:

- Agree the priority areas for the year
- Approve the annual Member training plan
- Financial budget allocation and other capacity to support Member development activities

- Attendance across the development programme
- Conference / seminar attendance
- Effectiveness and satisfaction with individual sessions as reported in the feedback forms and any related surveys

### **Reporting and Continuous Improvement**

Findings from the annual review will be reported to full Council.

Recommendations will focus on:

- Enhancing the quality and relevance of development opportunities.
- Ensuring equitable access for all Members.
- Aligning resources with strategic priorities and emerging challenges.

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## General Purposes Committee

21 January 2026

### Part 1 - Public

#### Delegated



Cabinet Member

Cllr Des Keers, Cabinet Member for Community Services

Responsible Officer

Damian Roberts, Chief Executive

Report Author

Alison Finch, Safer & Stronger Communities Manager

## Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance Accreditation – Policies and Procedures

### 1 Summary and Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The Borough Council is working to achieve accreditation from the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA). As part of this work, there needs to be policies and procedures in place to show how the council are supporting both staff and residents who may be experiencing domestic abuse. This report gives details about the policies and procedures that have been developed and how these will support staff and residents.

### 2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

- 2.1 Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.
- 2.2 By having these policies and procedures in place the council can ensure that residents and staff know what to expect if they approach the Borough Council as victims of domestic abuse.

### 3 Recommendations

- 3.1 For Members to approve and adopt the Policies and Procedures as stated within this report.

### 4 Introduction and Background

- 4.1 Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC) does not tolerate violence and abuse and is dedicated to tackling domestic abuse (DA) and ensuring that all staff feel safe at work. The council promotes a culture that prioritises the safety and wellbeing of victim/survivors, and places responsibility firmly on the perpetrator.

- 4.2 As part of the work to tackle domestic abuse the council is looking to achieve an accreditation from the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA). This scheme is aimed at helping Local Authorities and Housing Associations improve their response to domestic abuse. It is the benchmark for how housing providers should respond to domestic abuse in the UK.
- 4.3 The Borough Council is currently working towards the 'bronze' level accreditation and to achieve this must meet a series of standards and provide clear evidence demonstrating how each one is being fulfilled. As part of the bronze level, policies and procedures must be in place for both staff and residents.
- 4.4 The Borough Council already had a Domestic Abuse Policy for Staff, and this has now been reviewed and updated. The policy outlines how TMBC will identify signs of domestic abuse among staff, respond to disclosures and what support will be provided to staff members that are experiencing domestic abuse. This is attached at Annex 1.
- 4.5 DAHA also requires a Staff Procedure to be in place for disclosing domestic abuse. This is attached at Annex 2. This procedure should be read alongside the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council Employees Domestic Abuse Policy. It offers practical guidance for council employees on how to respond to domestic abuse.
- 4.6 The council also needs to have a Policy and Procedure in place for residents who are approaching the Borough Council's Housing service for support with accommodation/housing advice.
- 4.7 The Residents Domestic Abuse Policy aims to outline how staff will respond to people approaching TMBC Housing for reasons of domestic abuse. It will also apply to those living in interim or temporary accommodation provided by the council. This is attached at Annex 3.
- 4.8 The Resident's Domestic Abuse Procedure outlines practical steps that Housing staff can take to respond to cases of domestic abuse. This is attached at Annex 4.

## **5 Proposal**

- 5.1 Members to approve and adopt the policies and procedures set out within this document.

## **6 Other Options**

- 6.1 Members may decide not to adopt the policies and procedures, but this would mean that the Borough Council could not proceed with the DAHA accreditation process.

## **7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 7.1 Funding for the DAHA accreditation was provided by KCC, so there is no cost to the Borough Council.

## **8 Risk Assessment**

- 8.1 All appropriate risk assessments have taken place.

## **9 Legal Implications**

- 9.1 There are no legal implications associated with this paper.

## **10 Consultation and Communications**

- 10.1 Consultation with Borough Council staff has been undertaken through the Joint Employee Consultative Committee, who were supportive of the policies and procedures.

## **11 Implementation**

- 11.1 Once approved, the Policies and Procedures will be available on the Borough Council's Intranet for staff and website for residents. The aim is to achieve the 'bronze' DAHA accreditation by March 2026 and then move on to the 'silver' award.

## **12 Cross Cutting Issues**

- 12.1 Climate Change and Biodiversity

- 12.1.1 Limited or low impact on emissions and environment.

- 12.1.2 Climate change advice has not been sought in the preparation of the options and recommendations in this report.

- 12.2 Equalities and Diversity

- 12.2.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Background Papers	None
Annexes	Annex 1 - Domestic Abuse Staff Policy Annex 2 - Domestic Abuse Staff Procedure Annex 3 - Resident's Domestic Abuse Policy Annex 4 - Resident's Domestic Abuse Procedure

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# **Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council**

## **Staff Domestic Abuse Policy**

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC) does not tolerate violence and abuse. We are dedicated to tackling domestic abuse (DA) and ensuring that all staff feel safe at work. This policy outlines how to identify signs of domestic abuse among staff and respond with accordingly.
- 1.2 This policy supports the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) framework which aims to improve Local Authority response to domestic abuse. TMBC will prioritise the DAHA values and endeavour to uphold them in all areas of work.
- 1.3 TMBC is committed to ensuring that support is in place for staff that are experiencing domestic abuse and that our approach is led by the victim/survivor.
- 1.4 TMBC recognises the importance of awareness raising and will work to ensure that all staff understand DA. We will make it clear to all staff the council's stance on domestic abuse.
- 1.5 The Employee Domestic Abuse Policy will be supported by the Employee Domestic Abuse Procedure which will provide practical support and guidance on how to respond in cases of domestic abuse.

## **2. The Domestic Abuse Act**

- 2.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines DA as the behaviour of a person towards another person if both are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other; and if the behaviour is abusive.
- 2.2 Definition of personally connected:
  - They are or have been married to each other
  - They are or have been civil partners of each other
  - They have agreed to marry one another (whether the agreement has been terminated)
  - They have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether the agreement has been terminated)
  - They are or have been in an intimate personal relationship with each other.
  - They each have or there has been a time when they each have had a parental relationship in relation to the same child.
  - They are relatives.
  - A person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if the person is a parent of the child or the person has parental responsibility for the child.
- 2.3 Behaviour is Abusive if consists of any of the following:
  - Physical or sexual abuse
  - Violent or threatening behaviour
  - Controlling or coercive behaviour
  - Economic abuse

- Psychological, emotional or other abuse
- 2.4 It is important to note that women experiencing domestic abuse may also be experiencing other forms of VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls) such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation and honour-based violence.
- 2.5 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 also recognises that children who have witnessed domestic abuse are now considered victims in their own right.

### **3. Context**

- 3.1 This policy can be read in conjunction with other TMBC staff policy and national policy.
- 3.2 Staff Policy
- [Anti-Bullying and Harassment Procedure.pdf](#)
  - [Data Protection Act 2018](#)
  - [Flexible Working Time Off Policy 2024.pdf](#)
  - [Sickness Absence Policy and Proceedure.pdf](#)
  - [Disciplinary Procedure.pdf](#)
  - [Menopause in the Workplace Policy 2025.pdf](#)
- 3.3 National legislation
- [Data Protection Act 2018](#)
  - [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
  - [Equality Act 2010](#)
  - [The Workplace \(Health, Safety and Welfare\) Regulations 1992](#)
  - [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#)

### **4. Policy Aims and Intent**

- 4.1 TMBC believe that no staff member should live in fear of domestic abuse. We intend for staff experiencing domestic abuse to be met with empathy, support and a non-judgemental approach from colleagues and management.
- 4.2 This policy outlines how TMBC will identify signs of domestic abuse among staff, respond to disclosures and what support will be provided to staff members that are experiencing domestic abuse.
- 4.3 The council will aim to,
- Identify indicators of domestic abuse such as unexplained injuries, frequent absences from work or personality changes.
  - Provide survivor-led support for staff experiencing domestic abuse.
  - Ensure that all staff and management have been trained on DA and are confident responding to disclosures from colleagues.
  - Uphold the DAHA framework throughout all aspects of support.

## **5. Awareness in the workplace**

- 5.1 TMBC will provide training on domestic abuse so that all staff, particularly Line Managers, can identify indicators of DA and understand the potential impacts it has on colleagues.
- 5.2 Staff will be able to disclose experiences of DA to a Line Manager, colleague, a member of Personnel Services or a member of the DA Champions Network.
- 5.3 TMBC will ensure the domestic abuse policy and procedure is accessible to staff on the intranet. Information on domestic abuse will also include in staff briefings, new staff inductions and on the staff intranet.
- 5.4 TMBC will engage in awareness raising in office spaces by providing posters and leaflets signposting to DA services.
- 5.5 This policy will also include a list of local and national domestic abuse services for staff to access if needed. This will include a list of specialist/ by and for services. See Appendix 1

## **6. Responding to disclosures**

- 6.1 Staff wishing to make a disclosure of domestic abuse will be able to request a safe, confidential space to do so.
- 6.2 TMBC will respond to disclosures with sensitivity, confidentiality and flexibility. TMBC will always maintain a survivor-led approach and respect staff's ability to make their own decisions. TMBC understands that victim/survivors are the experts in their experience and will work with the staff member to create a robust safety plan that meets their needs.
- 6.3 Line managers can offer staff a range of support options including but not limited to.
  - Paid leave for relevant appointments such as counselling, solicitors, court, medical, support agencies or rearranging childcare.
  - Flexible working to mitigate disruption caused by domestic abuse.
  - Temporary or permanent changes to working hours or shift pattern.
  - Measures to safeguard working environment, such as changing staff's work number to avoid harassing calls, removing staff to a private office space, making reception staff aware of perpetrator if they attend office requesting to speak with victim/survivor.
  - Encouraging staff to utilise the Employee Assistance Programme for free advice and counselling services.
  - Providing staff with information on external DA support services of courses such as Own My Life or Freedom Programme.

- 6.4 In an instant where the staff member is considered high risk through professional judgement, TMBC will make appropriate referrals to safeguard the staff member and associated persons. This can include a MARAC referral, referral to children or adult safeguarding or contacting the emergency services.

## **7. Holding perpetrators accountable**

- 7.1 TMBC will always hold perpetrators accountable for abusive behaviour, even if they are an employee of the council. TMBC recognise the challenges that victim/survivors face when making a disclosure. These challenges can be exacerbated in the workplace due to fear of an escalation or not being believed by the employer.
- 7.2 If a victim/survivor discloses they are experiencing domestic abuse from a TMBC employee, the council will believe the survivor and put in safety measures referenced above to safeguard the staff member. TMBC will take action against the perpetrator if they are found guilty of an offence through criminal proceedings or it is found that they have been using Council property/equipment to abuse their victim. TMBC may also take other action against the perpetrator as appropriate.
- 7.3 Incidents at work will be dealt with under the Disciplinary or Anti-Bullying and Harassment policies. Abuse of provisions in this policy are a serious disciplinary offence and will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure.
- 7.4 If an employee recognises that they are a perpetrator and approaches requests support, TMBC will signpost the staff member to local perpetrator services.

## **8. DA Champions Network**

- 8.1 TMBC will develop and maintain a Domestic Abuse Champions Network. The network will include members from different backgrounds who will act as a point of contact in their teams and the wider council for staff who require information or support.
- 8.2 DA Champions will receive DA training to equip them with the knowledge and skills to carry out their role. It is understood that DA Champions are not specialists and will promote the network alongside their work obligations. They do not replace co-located specialist roles.
- 8.3 The role of a DA Champion will include:
- Providing support to colleagues experiencing domestic abuse.
  - Act as a point of contact in their team and wider council.
  - Raising awareness of DA and its impacts.
  - Promoting cultural and attitudinal shifts in their team.

- To build relationships with external agencies.
- 8.4 TMBC encourages and welcomes input from staff with lived experiences of domestic abuse on how we can improve our response to DA. We are committed to innovation and are striving to ensure our council is inclusive to all.

## **9. Data Protection**

- 9.1 TMBC understands the challenges that staff face when making a disclosure, this information will be kept strictly confidential, with the understanding that a breach of confidentiality could have a serious impact on the staff member.
- 9.2 TMBC recognises that there will be instances where confidentiality will need to be breached lawfully in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.
- 9.3 Where there is a significant safeguarding concern for the staff member or related persons, TMBC can share information with appropriate services to fulfil safeguarding obligations.
- 9.4 It is best practice for TMBC to inform the staff member when information needs to be shared without their consent. Information sharing should be conducted with sensitivity and consider whether this increases risk to the victim/survivor.
- 9.5 TMBC will inform the staff of their right to confidentiality and will not share any information without their explicit consent.
- 9.6 If a record is kept on the discussion between Line Manager and employee, the record will be retained in a safe location which is not public. The document will be restricted and use password protection. The document will be saved discreetly to avoid breaches in confidentiality. Disclosures will not be visible on employee's personal record.

## **10. Compliance**

- 10.1 We will review this policy every three years, or sooner if there are any significant changes in Policy before this time.
- 10.2 We will also review this policy in response to any Domestic Homicide Reviews, Safeguarding Adults Reviews or any Serious Case Reviews

## 11. Appendix 1

11.1 Below are organisations that can offer support for Domestic Abuse.

### 11.2 Local Services

- **One Stop Shop**, 4 New Wharf Road, Tonbridge, TN9 1DS. Every Wednesday from 9am to noon. Domestic Abuse One Stop Shops offer free advice, information and support from a range of agencies under one roof to help victims of domestic abuse.
- **DAVSS (Domestic Abuse Volunteer Service)** [office@davss.org.uk](mailto:office@davss.org.uk) or 01892 570538
- **Look Ahead** [kentdomesticabuse@lookahead.org.uk](mailto:kentdomesticabuse@lookahead.org.uk) or 0333 010 4660.
- **Victim Support** Assessment and Triage: 0808 168 9276
- **Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service**: 0808 168-9111

11.3 TMBC recognises that it does not fund any specialist or 'by and for' services. It is important that staff can access specialist services.

- **Ashiana Network**, Advice and support for South Asian, Turkish and Iranian women. Call 020 8539 0427
- **Kiran Support Services** Advice and support for women and children from Asian backgrounds. Call 020 8558 1986. Available 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Email: [Info@kiranss.org.uk](mailto:Info@kiranss.org.uk)
- **IMECE**- Advice, information, and support for women from Turkish, Kurdish and Turkish Cypriot backgrounds. Call 020 7354 1359. Available 9:30am to 5:30pm Monday to Friday
- **Karma Nirvana**- Advice and support for victims of honour-based violence and forced marriage. Call 0800 5999 247. Available 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday
- **Southall Black Sisters**- Advice and support for Black, African, or Caribbean Women, as well as survivors with no recourse to public funds. Call 0208 571 9595. Available 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday
- **Latin American Women's Aid**- Advice and support for Latin American Women. Call 020 7275 0321 phone number has a web link on it that goes to a mobile number. Available 9:30am to 5:30pm Monday to Friday
- **The Traveller Movement**- Advice and peer support for women from Irish, Gypsy, or Roma Traveller backgrounds experiencing abuse. Call 0207 607 2002
- **National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline (GALOP)**- Advice and support for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, or Intersex survivors. Call 0800 999 5248. Available 10am to 5pm Monday, Tuesday, Friday 10 to 8pm Wednesday to Thursday.
- **Respect Men's Advice Line**- Advice and support for male survivors of Domestic Abuse. [Domestic Abuse Helpline for Men | Men's Advice Line UK](#). Call 0808 8010327- Monday–Friday 10am-5pm

### 11.4 Support for Perpetrators

- **Community Domestic Abuse Perpetrators Programme (CDAP)**: [kentcdap@gmail.com](mailto:kentcdap@gmail.com) or 07956228891/07718120870
- **Respect**: A support service providing advice and guidance to perpetrators of domestic abuse who need help changing their behaviour. Call 0808 802 4040 Monday-Friday 9am-5pm.

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# **Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council**

## **Employee Domestic Abuse Procedure**

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## 1. Introduction

This procedure should be read alongside the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council Employees Domestic Abuse Policy. It offers practical guidance for council employees on how to respond to domestic abuse.

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council is committed to providing a safe and supportive working environment for all employees. We promote a culture that prioritises the safety and wellbeing of victim/survivors, and places responsibility firmly on the perpetrator.

### What is Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse can be a single incident or a pattern of behaviour used to exert power and control over another person, often creating fear. It occurs within close relationships, such as with a partner, ex-partner, or family member. It can include:

- physical or sexual abuse.
- violent or threatening behaviour.
- controlling or coercive behaviour.
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional or other abuse.
- stalking and harassment

### Domestic Abuse is a Workplace Issue

Given the widespread nature of domestic abuse, it is possible that some employees may experience it during their time with the council. The workplace can often serve as a place of safety for victim/survivors. However, risks may arise—particularly if someone has recently left an abusive relationship. According to the Equality and Human Rights Commission 75% of women experiencing domestic abuse in the UK are targeted at their place of work. It is all our responsibility to ensure that we are supporting survivors of domestic abuse.

## 2. Indicators of Domestic Abuse

There are many indicators that someone is experiencing domestic abuse, it is important to look out for these signs in staff and to instigate a conversation if you have concerns.

- Changes in employees working pattern, including increased sick leave, lateness and unauthorised time off.
- Reduced quality of work.
- Change in phone/email usage, receiving a high volume of personal calls, not answering calls, negative reaction to receiving calls, texts or emails.
- Spending more time at work than usual.
- Frequent visits to work from employee's partner/family member.
- Change in personality, employee becoming withdrawn, anxious, distracted etc.

- Concerned about leaving work on time.
- Visible injuries such as bruises, cuts or marks with no explanation.
- Change in dress which is ill suited to the weather to cover up injuries.
- Change in how much/whether make-up is worn.
- Indicators of substance misuse.

### Additional Barriers

It is difficult for victim/survivors to make disclosures of domestic abuse. Some groups may also experience more challenges and barriers to accessing support.

- Members of the LGBTQ+ community- May not be 'out' in the workplace, fears that the perpetrator will 'out' them to colleagues.
- People with disabilities- May fear repercussions in the workplace.
- People from the Global Majority- Experience institutional racism and discrimination and may have a lack of trust in services.
- Elderly people- Can be more isolated and dependent on the perpetrator.

### Remote Working (Working from Home)

TMBC is committed to providing flexible working opportunities for staff, however remote working can also mean that it is more difficult to identify indicators of domestic abuse. Remote working for employees experiencing DA can also be dangerous and lead to increased abuse.

Where an employee discloses that they are experiencing domestic abuse, there will always be an option to work from a Council office if working remotely is not safe. The Council recognises its duty to ensure all staff have a safe working environment and will work sensitively with staff to identify appropriate arrangements, respecting confidentiality at all times.

## 3. Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council Commitment

If you are employed by Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, here is what to expect if you want to make a disclosure of domestic abuse.

- A non-judgemental approach- Whether you make a disclosure to a trusted colleague, Line Manager or DA Champion, your disclosure will be believed.
- Survivor-Led- TMBC response will be led by you and your needs. This can include workplace adjustments, referrals to specialist services or just someone to listen to your experiences.
- Confidentiality- If you chose to make a disclosure of domestic abuse, information will be kept confidential, unless you tell us that you are at risk of death or serious harm. In this situation we will have to break confidentiality to safeguard you.

#### 4. Procedure for Staff

**Step 1-** A colleague makes a disclosure to you of domestic abuse.

**Step 2** - Listen to them, validate their experiences and believe them.

**Step 3-** Are they in immediate danger?

- If yes, contact 999 and inform your Line Manager.

**Step 4-** Ask survivor if they would like support from a domestic abuse service.

- If yes, signpost them to services outlined in DA Staff Policy or EAP.
- Encourage them to speak with the DA Champion (see Appendix 1) or DA Co-ordinator who can provide more information.
- If no, respect survivor's decision and ensure they know where to find support for the future.

**Step 5-** Ask the survivor whether they feel comfortable informing HR/Line Manager.

- If yes, offer to attend with them if you are considered a safe person.
- If no, respect the survivor's decision.

**Step 6-** Hearing details of domestic abuse can be upsetting. Access support for yourself via the Employee Assistance Programme.

#### 5. Procedure for Line Managers

**Step 1-** An employee wants to make a disclosure of domestic abuse, or you notice indicators of domestic abuse in a staff member.

**Step 2-** Responding to a disclosure

- Find a safe, comfortable room to talk. Ensure that it is confidential. Do not initiate the conversation over a call as you will not know if the perpetrator is present.
- Always believe the victim/survivor, do not ask for proof of domestic abuse and emphasise that it is not the employee's fault.
- Avoid any language that blames the victim/survivor. Always ensure that the perpetrator is held accountable in conversations
- Discuss confidentiality, let them know that you will uphold confidentiality unless there is a safeguarding concern.
- Ensure that the conversation is led by the staff member, it is important to go at their pace and not to pressure them into making decisions.
- Avoid being reactive to details of domestic abuse, as this could prevent the employee from discussing their experiences.

- Make a simple record of the conversation.

**Step 3-** Are they in immediate danger or high-risk

- If yes, call 999 and inform relevant safeguarding leads.
- Consider making a MARAC referral via this link [MARAC Referral](#)

**Step 4-** Offer support to the survivor, keeping their safety and needs central to the process.

Safe contact

- Arrange a safe emergency contact with the employee who can be contacted if employee does not come to work.
- Maintain contact with the employee during absence.
- Discuss changing route to and from work.
- Consider changing employee's office location.
- Change employee's working hours/start and finish time.
- Provide security to and from car/bus or train station.

Safety at work

- Change locks and security codes to enter the workplace.
- Consider a desk alarm or personal alarm for the employee.
- If appropriate, employee to provide image of the perpetrator to reception staff to prevent them entering the building and to notify police.
- Ensure employees do not do any lone work.
- All incidents of abuse or violence that occur in the workplace to be recorded.
- Awareness raising in the workplace, accessible literature on DA support services.
- Robust systems for employees working in the community. Including checking in and out, sharing location.

Safe communication

- Consider changing employee's work email addresses and phone number.
- Ensure that employee's personal information is secure.
- If appropriate, issue instructions for all staff to not give any information on employee's contact details or location.
- Change duties if employee is in a customer facing role and could have contact with perpetrator.

Managing workload

- Consider flexible working or changes to working patterns.
- Adjust workload by reassigning tasks or extending deadlines.

- Providing flexi time, lieu time or paid time off for employee to attend appointments related to domestic abuse such as with DA specialist, solicitor or doctor.

#### Specialist support

- Signpost employee to local domestic abuse services who can complete a risk assessment.
- Consider signposting to specialist domestic abuse services if appropriate.
- Signpost to DA Champion (see Appendix 1) or DA Co-ordinator for more information.
- Ensure employee can access Employee Assistance Programme.
- Make accommodations for IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor) to meet with employee in confidential room in office if necessary.

**Step 5-** If appropriate and with the consent of the survivor, inform HR about the situation.

- Ensure information is kept confidential and does not appear on staff records.

**Step 6-** Hearing details of domestic abuse can be upsetting. Access support for yourself via Employee Assistance Programme.

**Step 7-** Schedule a follow-up meeting with the survivor to check-in with them and discuss escalation in risk or changes to wellbeing.

### The Domestic Abuse Champions Network

The DA Champions Network is a group of TMBC employees who have received specialist domestic abuse training and are a point of contact for other staff members who would like support, information or advice about domestic abuse. DA Champions will also contribute to awareness raising in their team and ensure that there is a whole-council approach to responding to domestic abuse. Information about the network and which employees are champions can be found on the staff intranet.

## 6. Managing Perpetrators

There may be instances where an employee has been identified as a perpetrator of domestic abuse either through self-disclosure or potential warning signs. These could include:

- Negative, derogatory comments made by employee towards partner/family.
- Expressing anger and blaming partner/family.
- Constant messaging or calling partner/family.

- Injuries caused by victim/survivor in self-defensive, for example scratches on hands.

In line with TMBC's attitude to domestic abuse, it is important to have open conversations with perpetrators.

- Engaging with perpetrators does not condone their behaviour, it is important to inform them that their behaviour will not be tolerated.
- Inform the perpetrator that violence and abuse committed either in or outside of the workplace can lead to disciplinary action or dismissal.
- Consider whether redeployment is necessary if perpetrator works with vulnerable adults or children.
- Help the perpetrator to understand the cost of their behaviour, physical and emotional impact on victim/survivor, prison, loss of job, loss of relationship, loss of contact with children.
- Provide perpetrator with information on support services and perpetrator programmes.
- Line Managers should keep a confidential record of the discussion.

Alongside addressing the behaviour of the perpetrator, it is important that the safety of the victim/survivor is always considered. Confidentiality cannot be assured for the perpetrator due to the potential for police investigation or legal proceedings.

### Employee perpetrator and employee victim/survivor

There may be instances where an employee is perpetrating domestic abuse towards another employee. In this situation, it is important that the perpetrator's work pattern is altered rather than the victim/survivor. Requiring the survivor to alter their routine can compound the trauma, create a sense of punishment, and perpetuate a culture where victims are marginalised rather than supported.

However, it is important that each case is considered individually, it may not be safe to change the perpetrator's routine if they have access to the victim/survivor outside of the workplace as this could cause an increase in abuse.

Line managers of both the perpetrator and victim/survivor should be prioritising the victim/survivor's safety at work.

## 7. Information Sharing and Recording

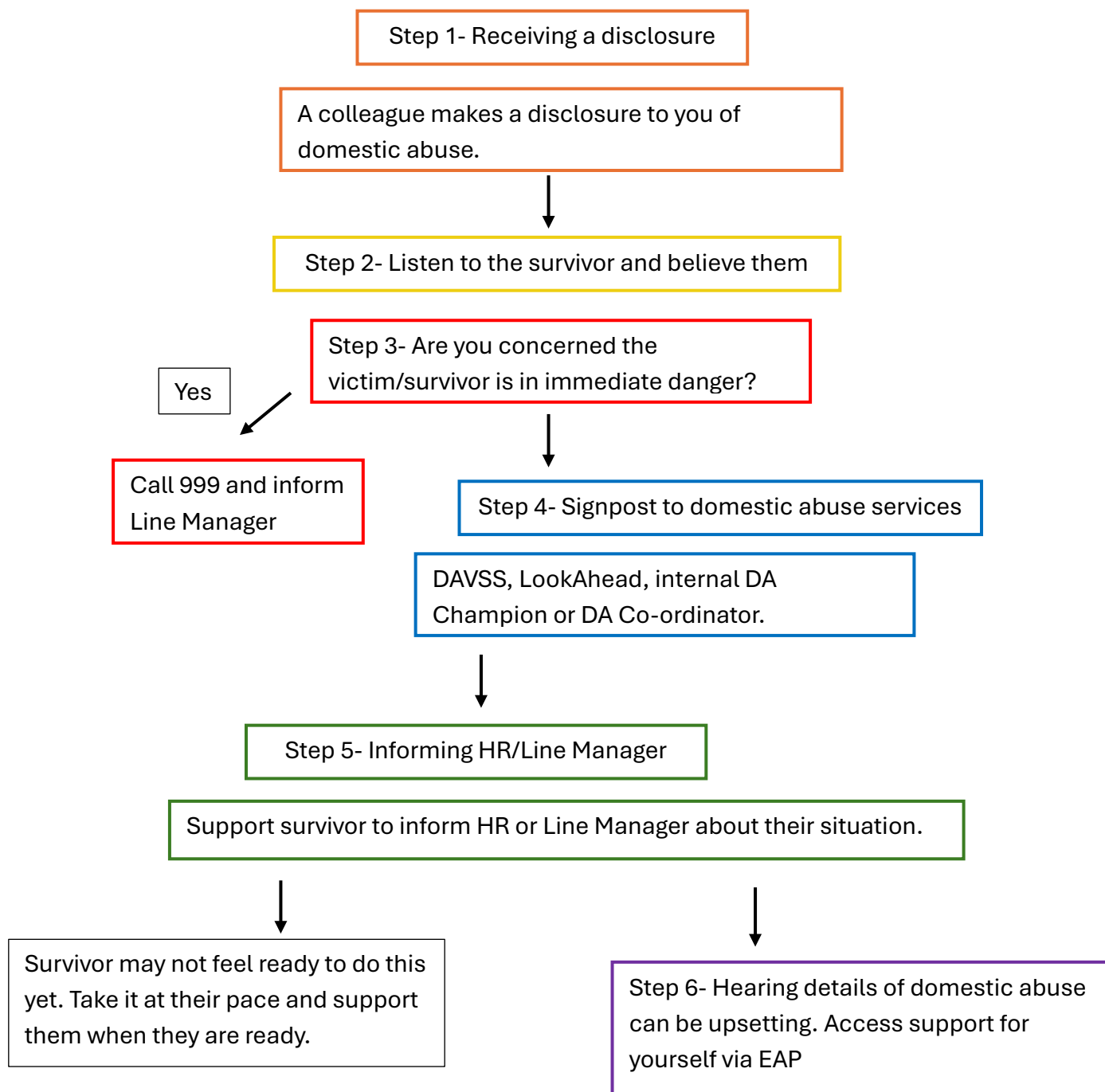
If an employee discloses domestic abuse this information should be kept confidential, information should only be shared with external agencies if the employee consents. In cases where there is a safeguarding concern, information can be shared with other agencies to safeguard the employee.

Breaching confidentiality can have serious consequences for the employee. Not only can it affect their work, but it can also put them at risk of further abuse and harm.

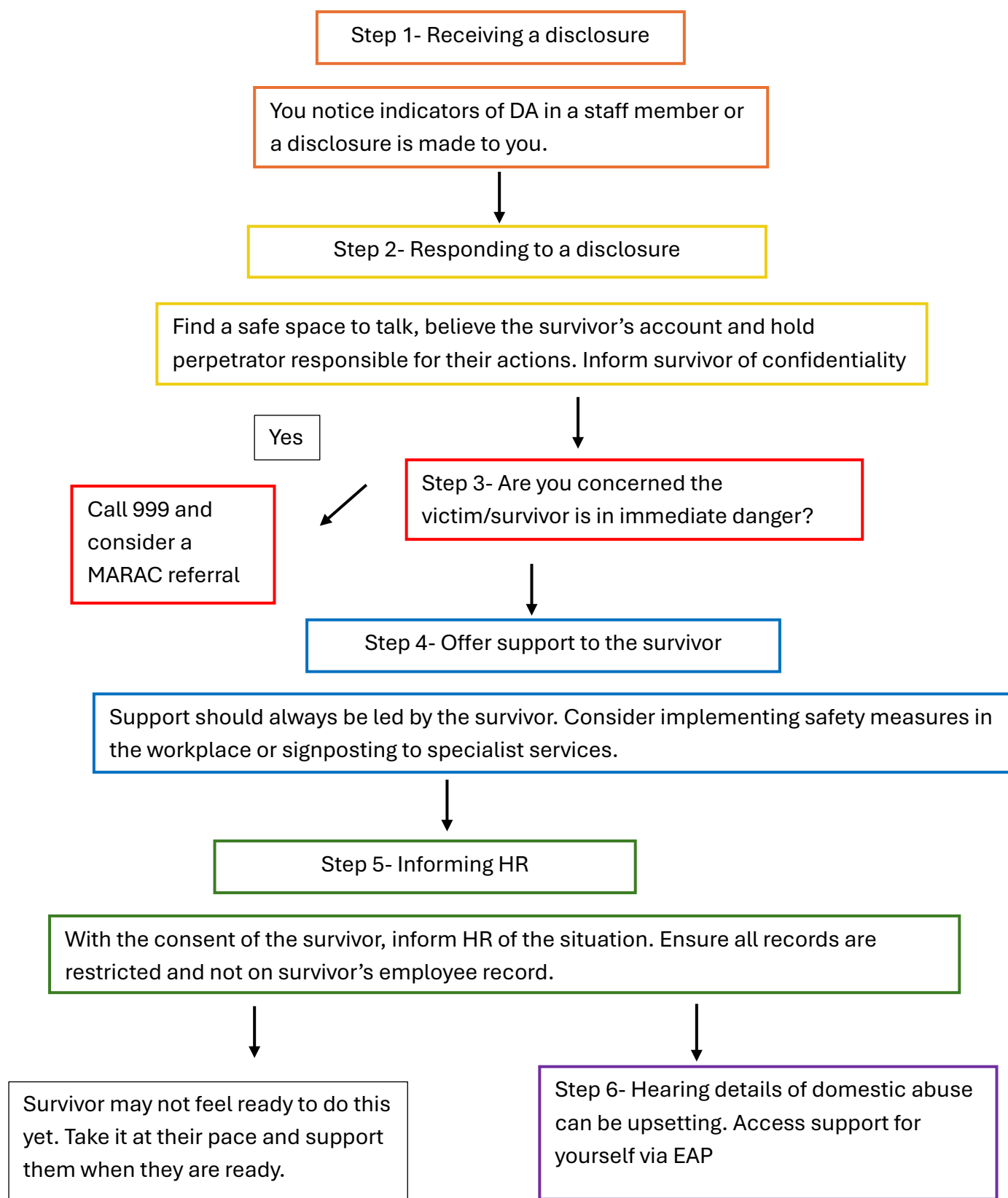
Information should be recorded accurately with a non-judgemental language. It should outline any actions taken by TMBC to support and safeguard the employee. These records should be kept outside of employee records and should be stored securely to ensure they remain confidential.



## 8. Flowchart Procedure for Staff



## 9. Flowchart for Line Managers





## Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

### Resident Domestic Abuse Policy

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (TMBC) does not tolerate violence and abuse. We are dedicated to tackling domestic abuse (DA) and ensuring our borough is safe for all residents. This policy outlines how the council will respond to victim/survivors of domestic abuse who present as homeless.
- 1.2 This policy supports the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) framework which aims to improve the housing sector's response to domestic abuse. TMBC will prioritise the DAHA values and endeavour to uphold them in all areas of work.
- 1.3 TMBC recognises that women and girls are disproportionately impacted by domestic abuse and other forms of VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls). We understand that this is due to gender inequality and misogyny which is still prevalent in society. Staff are committed to disrupting this when possible.
- 1.4 However, we know that domestic abuse can affect anyone – male or female and we are committed to providing an excellent service to anyone who needs our help.
- 1.5 TMBC acknowledges the complex barriers that may prevent someone from disclosing domestic abuse. We commit to believing survivors when they chose to make a disclosure and will use a survivor-led approach throughout the housing process, responding in a non-judgemental manner and supporting victims/survivors to exert agency in the decision-making process.
- 1.6 The Domestic Abuse Policy will be supported by the Domestic Abuse Procedure which will provide practical support and guidance on how staff will respond to cases of domestic abuse.

## **2. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021**

- 2.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines DA as the behaviour of a person towards another person if both are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other; and if the behaviour is abusive.
- 2.2 Definition of being personally connected:
  - They are or have been married to each other.
  - They are or have been civil partners of each other.
  - They have agreed to marry one another (whether the agreement has been terminated).

- They have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether the agreement has been terminated).
- They are or have been in an intimate personal relationship with each other.
- They each have or there has been a time when they each have had a parental relationship in relation to the same child.
- They are relatives.
- A person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if the person is a parent of the child or the person has parental responsibility for the child.

2.3 Behaviour is Abusive if it consists of any of the following:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic abuse
- Psychological, emotional or other abuse

2.4 It is important to note that women experiencing domestic abuse may also be experiencing other forms of VAWG such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation and honour-based violence.

2.5 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 also recognises that children who have witnessed domestic abuse are now considered victims in their own right.

### **3. Context**

3.1 This policy has been drafted to sit within the following national, regional and local context. This policy outlines TMBC's legal and statutory duty to respond to cases of domestic abuse.

3.2 National context

- [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/1/contents)
- [Housing Act 1996 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/42/contents)
- [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/1/contents)
- [Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/12/contents)
- [Equality Act 2010](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents)
- [Human Rights Act 1998](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/41/contents)
- [Data Protection Act 2018](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/contents)
- [Tackling violence against women and girls strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/strategies/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls)

3.3 Regional context

- [Domestic Abuse Strategy - Kent County Council](#)

3.4 Local context

- [Corporate strategy 2023 to 2027](#)
- [Housing Strategy and Policy](#)
- [Housing Allocation Policy](#)
- [Corporate Privacy Notice](#)
- [Safeguarding Policy.pdf](#)
- [Data Quality Policy TMBC.pdf](#)
- [Anti-social Behaviour Policy](#)
- [Anti-social Behaviour Procedure](#)
- [Corporate Debt Recovery Policy](#)

## **4. Policy Aims and Intent**

- 4.1 TMBC believe that no resident should live in fear of domestic abuse. Those experiencing domestic abuse will always be met with empathy, support and a non-judgemental approach from staff. A victim/survivor's disclosure is enough for us to provide emergency assistance.
- 4.2 This policy aims to outline how staff will respond to people approaching TMBC Housing for reasons of domestic abuse. It will also apply to those living in interim or temporary accommodation provided by the council.
- 4.3 The service will aim to:
- Identify early signs of abuse and prevent further abuse by offering advice and support.
  - Provide victims/survivors with a consistent and survivor-led service which is sensitive to the households needs.
  - Ensure staff are fully trained and have the right skills to respond to DA with a focus on safety-led case management. Staff will also have a clear understanding of the Domestic Abuse Policy.
  - Work collaboratively with partners towards the prevention of DA.
  - To meet the requirements of the DAHA accreditation.

## **5. Domestic Abuse Housing Options**

- 5.1 Housing staff will be alert to domestic abuse and will understand that it could come to their attention through direct disclosure, a homelessness application or other factors such as anti-social behaviour complaints or frequent repairs.
- 5.2 TMBC recognises that victim/survivors are experts of their own experience. We recognise that victim/survivors require different levels of intervention, and we will never pressure them to accept pathways they are not comfortable with.

### 5.3 TMBC is committed to a survivor-centred approach:

- This could include supporting victims/survivors to remain in their homes. Housing officers will provide guidance on legal options and can also make referrals to the Kent County Council SAFER Scheme. This target hardening scheme installs safety measures allowing victims/survivors to remain in their homes.
- Where possible TMBC Housing will endeavour to provide appointments with an officer of the same sex if requested.
- TMBC will arrange for interpreting services if a victim/survivor does not have English as a first language.
- The victim/survivor can request to meet an officer in a safe location to make a disclosure or discuss housing options.
- The victim/survivor can choose a safe contact method for officers to make contact.

### 5.4 Housing staff can also provide the following advice or options including:

- Support victim/survivors to access refuge options through signposting to the National Domestic Abuse Helpline.
- Refer or signpost victim/survivors to local DA services such as DAVSS, Look Ahead or the West Kent Domestic Abuse One-Stop Shop or other support services for benefits and legal advice.
- Housing officers can also refer to the internal Housing IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor), who is trained in completing DASH risk assessments and will also refer high-risk cases to MARAC.
- Refer or signposting victim/survivors to national organisations that provide specialist support to victim/survivors from the global majority, the LGBT+ community or those with specific vulnerabilities.

### 5.5 Presenting as homeless due to domestic abuse

- Victim/survivors fleeing domestic abuse can approach any local authority for housing assistance, they do not need a local connection.
- Adhering to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, all victim/survivors who are assessed as homeless due to domestic abuse and are eligible for assistance, will be granted automatic Priority Need and will be eligible for safe temporary accommodation.
- Housing staff will work collaboratively with the victim/survivor to create a Personal Housing Plan (PHP) which reflects their needs.

## **6. Holding perpetrators to account**

- ### 6.1
- TMBC believe that perpetrators are responsible for their abusive behaviour and will be held accountable. We understand that housing can often be used by perpetrators as a method of control. Council staff will aim to disrupt this

abusive behaviour by providing victims/survivors with support around their housing options and utilising enforcement options against perpetrators if necessary.

- 6.2 Housing staff will not contact the perpetrator without explicit consent from the victim/survivor. Housing staff will not disclose any information relating to domestic abuse to the perpetrator.
- 6.3 In cases where property damage has been caused by the perpetrator, TMBC will not hold the victim/survivor liable for charges.
- 6.4 Victim/survivors will be provided with information and guidance on how to pursue legal options and protections from the perpetrator.
- 6.5 If a perpetrator recognises their behaviour as abusive and requests support, staff can signpost to local perpetrator services.

## **7. Training**

- 7.1 TMBC recognises the importance of equipping staff with the knowledge and skills to respond to DA cases and providing a consistent standard across the housing service.
- 7.2 TMBC will provide training on domestic abuse awareness to all staff. Staff should have a competent understanding of Children and Adult Safeguarding and an awareness of other forms of VAWG such as female genital mutilation and honour-based violence.
- 7.3 Subject to funding TMBC will employ a specialist Housing IDVA role, who will be based in the TMBC Housing service. The Housing IDVA will provide specialist DA advice and complete DASH risk assessments and safety planning. TMBC will also employ a Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator role who will provide operational and strategic direction (subject to funding).
- 7.4 Housing staff will be well informed on referral pathways to local DA services, MARAC and have understand the DASH risk assessment.
- 7.5 TMBC will ensure that staff feel confident responding in an emergency or where immediate risk is identified.



## **8. Equality and Diversity**

- 8.1 Adherence to the Equalities and Diversity Act 2010 will be essential in the implementation of this policy and TMBC are committed to considering victim/survivors additional vulnerabilities.
- 8.2 TMBC are committed to meeting the needs of people from diverse backgrounds and have due regard to gender, age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership and pregnancy or maternity when dealing with those who approach the service.
- 8.3 TMBC will recognise the cultural implications and barriers of reporting DA and ensure that anyone who is experiencing DA can access our services.
- 8.4 TMBC understands that victim/survivors from the global majority may face additional challenges in reporting DA to statutory services such as police, social services or housing due to fears of institutional racism. This will be reflected in safety planning and support plans.
- 8.5 TMBC recognise that disabled women are twice as likely to experience domestic and are less likely to access support as the perpetrator can often be their carer. Furthermore, elderly victim/survivors face additional challenges in accessing support due to reduced mobility and social isolation.
- 8.6 There may be occasions where a victim/survivor has No Recourse to Public Funds or has insecure immigration status. In this case, housing officers will signpost to specialist services and legal advice.

## **9. Data Protection**

- 9.1 TMBC understands the challenges victim/survivors face when making a disclosure, this information will be kept confidential, and we will strive to build trust in our services.
- 9.2 TMBC staff will inform the victim/survivor of their right to confidentiality and will not share any information without explicit consent of the victim/survivor.
- 9.3 TMBC recognises that there will be instances where confidentiality will need to be breached lawfully in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.
- 9.4 Where there is a significant safeguarding concern for the victim/survivor or related persons, staff can share information with appropriate services to fulfil

safeguarding obligations. This could include referrals to the relevant safeguarding team or to MARAC.

- 9.5 It is best practice for staff to inform the victim/survivor when information needs to be shared without their consent. Information sharing should be conducted with sensitivity and consider whether this increases risk to the victim/survivor.
- 9.6 Records on domestic abuse cases will be kept up to date on TMBC case management system. All records should show a clear outcome of the case and flag referrals.

## **10. Compliance, monitoring and review**

- 10.1 TMBC will review this policy every three years, or sooner if there are any significant changes in national policy before this time.
- 10.2 TMBC will review this policy in response to any Domestic Homicide Reviews, Safeguarding Adult Reviews or any Serious Case Reviews.



## **Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council**

### **Resident Domestic Abuse Procedure for Housing Staff**

#### **Contents**

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## **1. Introduction**

This procedure should be used alongside the Tonbridge and Malling Resident Domestic Abuse Policy. This procedure outlines practical steps that Housing staff can take to respond to cases of domestic abuse.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines Domestic Abuse (DA) as the behaviour of a person towards another person if both are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other; and if the behaviour is abusive.

Definition of being personally connected:

- They are or have been married to each other
- They are or have been civil partners of each other
- They have agreed to marry one another (whether the agreement has been terminated)
- They have entered into a civil partnership agreement another (whether the agreement has been terminated)
- They are or have been in an intimate personal relationship with each other.
- They each have or there has been a time when they each have had a parental relationship in relation to the same child.
- They are relatives.
- A person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if the person is a parent of the child or the person has parental responsibility for the child.

Behaviour is abusive if it consists of any of the following:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic abuse
- Psychological, emotional or other abuse

[Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

## **2. Indicators of Domestic Abuse**

There are many indicators that a someone is experiencing domestic abuse, it is important to look out for these signs when having contact with residents.

Coercive control

- Does the resident appear isolated or unable to see friends and family?
- Is the resident put down or humiliated?
- Have you ever witnessed the resident being told where to go or what to wear?

- Does the resident frequently miss appointments or phone calls?

#### Economic abuse

- Have you noticed a resident asking for money?
- Do you see a resident being given an allowance?
- Has there been an increase in rent arrears?

#### Psychological abuse

- Have you noticed a resident being shouted at, belittled or called names?
- Has a resident ever been threatened?
- Have you noticed a resident not being able to leave their home?
- Has the resident ever been scared into submission?
- Have you noticed that the resident is receiving frequent calls or text messages?

#### Physical abuse

- Does the resident have any unexplained injuries?
- Is the resident wearing a lot of clothing that is ill suited to the weather?
- Are there frequent repairs that need to be done on the property?

#### Stalking

- Have you noticed someone consistently turning up or loitering around the resident's property?
- Does the resident receive lots of calls and texts which cause distress?
- Are the residents' curtains and blinds drawn during the day?
- Has there been any damage to the property caused by a break in?

### **3. Responding to Domestic Abuse**

Victim/survivors may respond differently to professional involvement and may decline support. It is important to understand that there are many reasons why a victim/survivor does not leave the perpetrator.

- Fear of the perpetrator and what they will do if they leave.
- Leaving is the most dangerous time for victim/survivors.
- Economic dependence on the perpetrator, no resources to leave.
- Isolated from friends and family.
- Fear of not being believed.
- Fear of the police or criminal justice system.
- Lack of knowledge around support services.
- Feelings of shame or failure.
- Fear of losing their children if they disclose.
- Cultural or religious expectations.
- Drug or alcohol dependency.
- Low self-esteem and self-confidence.

Officers should understand that there are complex factors which prevent residents from leaving the perpetrator, but none of them are the fault of the victim/survivor.

### Establishing contact

It is vital to ask the victim/survivor what the safest method of contact is. This could be a phone call, email, text message or in-person meeting.

If the victim/survivor requests a phone call, officers should ensure that they ask the resident if they are alone and if it is safe to speak before asking any questions about domestic abuse.

A victim/survivor could request an in-person meeting, it is important that officers can provide a safe place to meet, this can be done at Tonbridge Castle, the One Stop Shop or the Kings Hill office.

Be mindful of accessibility needs for victim/survivors. Ask if they need an interpreting service to make a disclosure or if they require wheelchair access to in-person appointments.

### Responding to disclosures

When responding to disclosure of domestic abuse, officers should always believe the survivor and validate their experiences. Here are some examples of responses:

- *“Thank you for telling me about your experience, I understand how difficult it is talking about DA”*
- *“It is really brave of you to let us know what has been going on, how can we best support you during this time?”*
- *“It is not your fault that this has happened, I believe you. What measures do you feel comfortable putting in place to increase your safety?”.*

A resident may be reluctant to disclose they are experiencing domestic abuse for fear of being evicted or judged.

It is also important to note that young people and those from different cultural background may not use the term ‘domestic abuse’, so using professional curiosity to explore what is going on can be helpful in confirming DA.

When a resident discloses domestic abuse, it is important that officers do not ask for any proof of abuse such as, pictures of physical abuse or crime reference numbers. Many victim/survivors do not want police involvement for reasons including fears of institutional racism or repercussions from the perpetrator.

Confirm confidentiality with the resident and reassure them that the perpetrator will not have access to the information. Explain that information will only be shared with external professionals with their consent or if there is a safeguarding concern.

### Good practice and Language

Language used by professionals has an impact on victim/survivors. It is important that your language is trauma-informed and does not place responsibility on the victim/survivor. Avoid questions such as “why don’t you leave?”, ensure that the perpetrator is held fully accountable in all conversations.

DAHA good practice language guide

<https://www.dahalliance.org.uk/media/11452/daha-good-practice-language-guide-for-staff-and-case-management.pdf>

## **4. DASH RIC and Safeguarding**

The DASH RIC (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-Based Violence Risk Indicator Checklist) is a tool developed by Safelives to identify potential risks indicators; this checklist has been developed using data from domestic homicide reviews.

If a resident makes a disclosure of domestic abuse, it is essential that a DASH RIC is completed by the officer, unless an assessment has already been completed by an external agency. In this case, the officer should contact the agency that completed the assessment to obtain the level of risk, key risk indicators and when the assessment was completed.

Always ask a victim/survivor if they have informed other agencies of the abuse, this will avoid the victim/survivor repeating themselves.

The DASH RIC provides a scoring system to assess whether cases are high risk:

- 0-9- Standard risk
- 10-13- Medium risk
- 14+- High risk

Be mindful of high-risk indicators such as non-fatal strangulation, threats to kill or honour-based violence. If these are present in the RIC but it does not score high, use professional judgment to decide if the case should be escalated.

TMBC also has a co-located Housing IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor), who can provide guidance to officers and complete DASH RIC.

### Safeguarding High Risk Cases

If an officer has completed the DASH RIC and the case has been assessed as high risk, the officer has a duty to complete the necessary safeguarding.

As there is a significant risk to life or serious harm, confidentiality can be breached to safeguard the survivor. It is important to always inform the survivor before this is done, if safe to do so.

#### MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference)

All cases that score 14+ on the DASH RIC must be referred to MARAC. Cases can also be referred based on professional judgement. At the conference a multi-agency approach is used to share information and create an action plan.

#### MARAC Referral form

[app.oasiscloud.co.uk/OASISDA/Core/Public/Referral/marac\\_web\\_referral.aspx?apikey=c56b468c-0d9d-4c81-89e8-91b774832ba7+%u00a0](http://app.oasiscloud.co.uk/OASISDA/Core/Public/Referral/marac_web_referral.aspx?apikey=c56b468c-0d9d-4c81-89e8-91b774832ba7+%u00a0)

#### Children Safeguarding

An officer can also consider making a referral to Children Social Care if there are children in the home who have witnessed/heard domestic abuse or have experienced it directly. You do not need consent to refer. It is important to note that many victim/survivors who are mothers are often fearful of Children's Services, believing that their children will be taken from them. In cases of DA, reassure the victim/survivor that the referral is not a reflection of their parenting, but the actions of the perpetrator.

#### Kent Children's Portal

#### Adult Safeguarding

If an adult is experiencing DA and has other support needs, you may need to make an Adult Safeguarding referral. This could include victim/survivors who are elderly, those with disabilities, substance misuse or mental health conditions.

#### Adult safeguarding forms - Kent County Council

#### Multi-Agency Risk Management (MARM)

There may be instances where a victim/survivor has other support needs but does not require an adult safeguarding referral. In this situation, officers can instigate a MARM. This panel will discuss the case and use a multi-agency approach to safeguard the victim/survivor.

[https://www.kmsab.org.uk/assets/1/final\\_marm\\_approved\\_by\\_kmsab.pdf](https://www.kmsab.org.uk/assets/1/final_marm_approved_by_kmsab.pdf)



## 5. Supporting residents

When supporting victim/survivors it is important to remember that they are experts in their own experience. Any support or safety plan should centralise their needs and the officer should adopt a collaborative approach in building a support plan.

It is crucial not to advise a victim/survivor to leave the relationship immediately, this is often the most dangerous time and can put victim/survivors at risk. First establish a clear safety plan and network of support.

### Housing support

Refuge- If a victim/survivor is fleeing DA and is not safe in the property, officers can suggest a refuge. Officers can call the National Domestic Abuse Helpline to ask for refuge vacancies.

Temporary or Emergency Accommodation- Victim/survivors who have approached TMBC as homeless due to DA and have been assessed as eligible for support will be considered Priority Need. In this instance, if a victim/survivor will be automatically eligible for safe temporary accommodation.

SAFER Scheme – Some victim/survivors may wish to remain in their property if the perpetrator does not reside there. In this case, officers can make a referral to the SAFER Scheme which installs security measures in the survivor's home.



Professionals only -  
SAFER Scheme referrals

Rent Arrears- There could be instances where victim/survivors accumulate rent arrears due to DA. If it has been verified that DA is the reason for rent arrears TMBC Housing will consider a waiver of the arrears.

### Domestic Abuse Support

Referral to local DA Services- With the consent of the victim/survivor, officers can make referrals to local DA services such as DAVSS, Lookahead or West Kent Domestic Abuse One-Stop Shop. Here the resident will receive specialist domestic abuse support and advice.

Referral to Housing IDVA- TMBC have a co-located Housing IDVA who works with the TMBC Housing team. If a victim/survivor requires more support and advice on their housing situation, officers can make a referral to the Housing IDVA using the Huume case management system.

Signposting- Housing officers can signpost survivors to a wide range of national specialist domestic abuse services, examples of which can be found in Appendix 1. It is

important to check with the victim/survivor that it is safe for them to store information on their phone or take material back home.

Forced Marriage Unit- TMBC recognises that victim/survivors of domestic abuse can also be experiencing other forms of VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls). If a resident discloses, they have experienced forced marriage or are at risk, officers can make a referral to the Forced Marriage Unit.

### Legal support

Victim/survivors may need support in accessing legal services or information regarding legal protection and civil orders. Housing staff will signpost residents to appropriate legal support services.

Non-Molestation Order- This order can prevent the perpetrator from engaging in specific actions such as contacting the victim/survivor, it can also cover specific addresses such as homes or schools.

Occupation Order- This order is often used to remove the perpetrator from the property, allowing the victim/survivor to remain in the home. This is usually for a set period of time.

Restraining Order- If a perpetrator has been convicted of criminal harassment or an offence relating to abuse, the court can grant a restraining order to protect the victim/survivor.

Claire's Law Disclosure- This scheme allows someone to request information from police on whether their partner has been abusive in the past. If there is a risk to the current partner, police can then consider whether to share the information. An application can be made by the victim/survivor or a third party, but the information would only be given to the person who is at risk.

Legal support services- Officers can signpost victim/survivors to legal services to support with securing a civil order. For example, DV Assist, NCDV, Flows or Courtnav.

## **6. Working with perpetrators**

TMBC Housing Officers may have to work with perpetrators of domestic abuse. There may be instances where perpetrators recognise the harm caused by their abusive behaviour and request support.

Referrals for support- Officers can refer perpetrators to Kent CDAP or Respect's online service or helpline.

### Holding perpetrators to account

There are likely to be times where the perpetrator does not recognise their behaviour as wrong or harmful and may continue to be abusive. It is important that perpetrators are held accountable for their behaviour, while also ensuring that any action is considered in relation to the safety and wishes of the victim/survivor.

Third party report- If an officer has received a disclosure of domestic abuse, it may be appropriate to make a third-party report to police. It is essential that the victim/survivor is informed of this, and steps are taken to safeguard them if police are involved.

Liable for damages- Perpetrators can often engage in property damage such as breaking windows, doors or damaging furniture and walls. It is crucial that the perpetrator is liable for these damages and not the victim/survivor, even if the perpetrator is not a registered tenant.

## **7. Case Management and Information Sharing**

TMBC Housing Officers will use the case management system Huume to record details of domestic abuse cases.

Domestic abuse cases will be tagged on the system so officers can identify DA cases. Cases that have been referred to MARAC should also be tagged.

Case notes should be kept up to date, factual and written with non-judgemental, empowering language.

If a new incident of DA occurs it is important to update the case notes and complete a new DASH RIC, if the risk level has changed because of the incident, the officer should respond accordingly.

### **Case notes should include:**

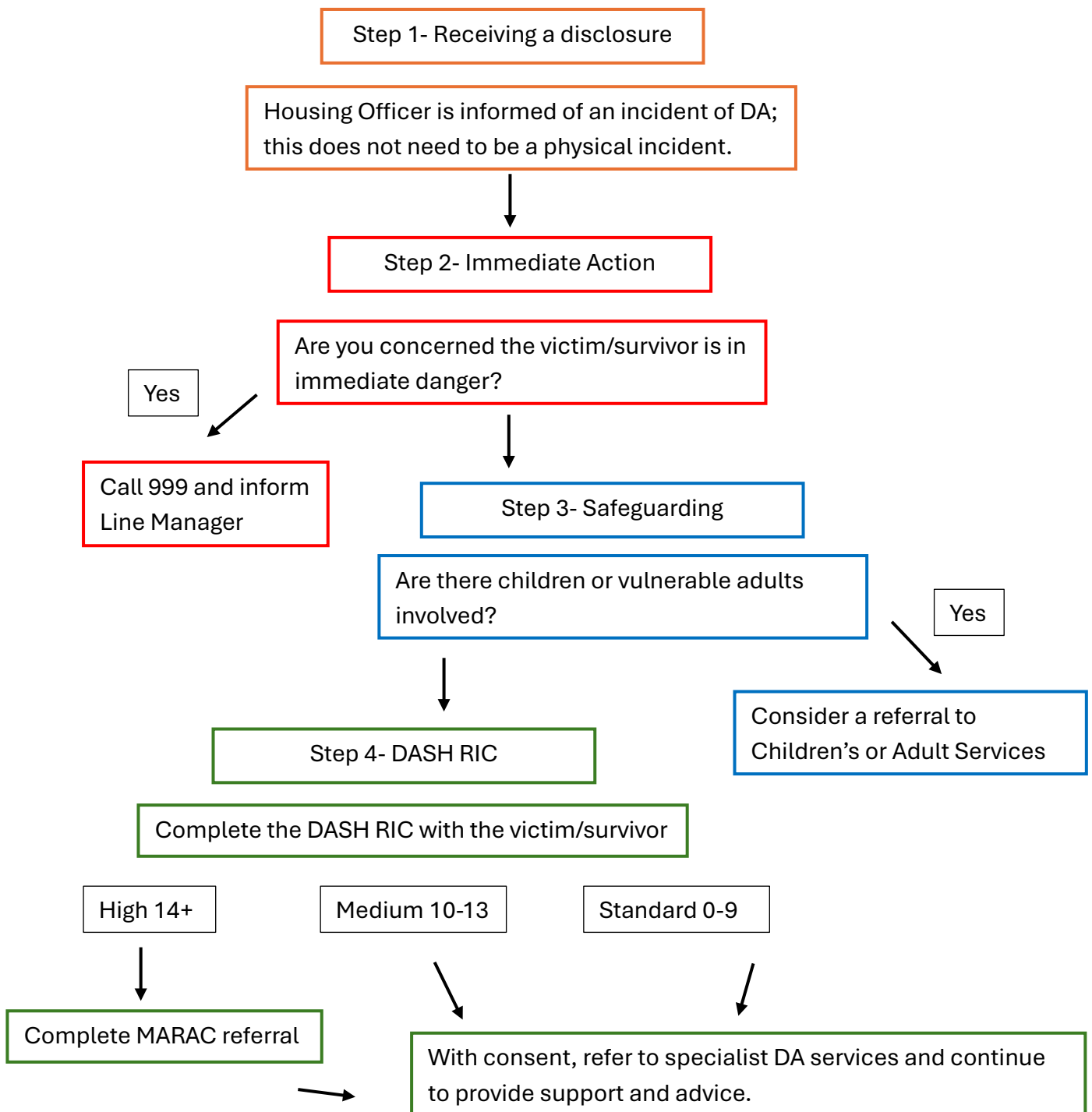
- Nature of disclosure.
- Relationship to the perpetrator, their name, date of birth and address.
- Presence of children in the household.
- Whether the victim/survivor is pregnant and the due date.
- Description of the incident of DA- Including the date, time, location, any injuries sustained.
- Whether this was the first incident of DA, how long abuse has been occurring, what is the frequency of incidents, is the frequency increasing.
- Enhanced risk factors- disability, recently left relationship, pregnancy etc
- Action taken by officer- DASH RIC completed, signposting etc.
- Details of other agencies involved.
- Whether information has been shared without consent and reasoning.

### Information Sharing

Information sharing with external professionals should only be done with the expressed consent of the victim/survivor. If you are sharing information, it is important to only include relevant information and not to go into a high level of detail of events. It is important that victim/survivors are able maintain their dignity throughout the process and do not have personal information shared.

Be mindful that perpetrators may contact TMBC Housing to acquire information about the victim/survivor. If an unknown person or professional asks for information, do not disclose any information without confirmation of who they are. You can ask them to send a follow up email with proof of where they work and evidence of consent from the victim/survivor.

## 8. TMBC Housing Service Flowchart



## 9. TMBC Housing Service support pathway

You have concerns that a resident is experiencing domestic abuse, or a resident wants to make a disclosure.

- Ensure that it is safe and convenient for the resident to speak with you.
- Create a safe and confidential space to discuss the disclosure.
- Meet the needs of the resident by arranging an interpreter or accessible space.
- Explain confidentiality, the resident's information will not be shared without consent unless there is a safeguarding concern.
- Listen to their experiences in a non-judgemental way, ensure they feel believed and not blamed for the abuse.
- Discuss and explore the resident's support needs always ensuring that their needs are at the centre of the discussion.
- Create a safety plan which is specific to the resident. Many victim/survivors will already be implementing safety planning in their own way. Listen to what they are doing and incorporated it into the plan.
- Ensure that all information is recorded in the case notes.
- Throughout the discussion, the perpetrator should be held responsible for their behaviour, and it should be clear that professionals and agencies are responsible for keeping the resident safe.

A disclosure has been made- Discuss what they would like to happen next, options and advice.

- Is the resident in immediate danger? If yes, contact 999. Be mindful that some survivors do not want police involvement but explain that you have a duty of care to keep them safe.
- Consider whether safeguarding referrals are necessary for children or vulnerable adults.
- Complete the DASH RIC if the resident consents. Based on the result, refer to MARAC if necessary.
- With consent of the resident, submit a referral to the Housing IDVA via Huume for ongoing domestic abuse support.
- Ask the resident if they want to complete a safety plan. A safety plan can be created even if resident does not consent to completing the DASH RIC. Ensure the plan is specific to the victim/survivor.
- Provide information on specialist domestic abuse support services and make referrals with resident's consent.
- Provide information on legal options and civil orders such as a Non-Molestation Order, Occupation Order or Restraining Order.
- Continue to provide support and advice around resident's housing situation. Explore appropriate options such as refuge, temporary accommodation, SAFER Scheme.
- Stay in regular contact with the resident throughout the housing process. Ensure you are contacting them via their chosen safe contact method. Stay up to date with new incidents and update the DASH RIC and safety plan accordingly.

- Use Huume to keep case notes up to date with all contact with resident. Ensure that notes are written factually and are non-judgemental.
- If you feel upset or overwhelmed when working on a domestic abuse case, seek support from your Line Manager or Employee Assistance Programme.

## 10. Appendix 1

A list of national specialist services that support victim/survivors of domestic abuse.

### **Ashiana Network**

Advice and support for South Asian, Turkish and Iranian women.  
Call 020 8539 0427

### **Kiran Support Services**

Advice and support for women and children from Asian backgrounds.  
Call 020 8558 1986. Available from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday  
Email: [Info@kiranss.org.uk](mailto:Info@kiranss.org.uk)

### **IMECE**

Advice, information, and support for women from Turkish, Kurdish and Turkish Cypriot backgrounds.  
Call 020 7354 1359. Available from 9:30am to 5:30pm Monday to Friday

### **Karma Nirvana**

Advice and support for victims of honour-based violence and forced marriage.  
Call 0800 5999 247. Available from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday

### **Southall Black Sisters**

Advice and support for Black, African, or Caribbean Women, as well as survivors with no recourse to public funds.  
Call 0208 571 9595. Available from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday

### **Latin American Women's Aid**

Advice and support for Latin American Women.  
Call 020 7275 0321 and phone number has a web link on it that goes to a mobile number.  
Available from 9:30am to 5:30pm Monday to Friday  
Email [referrals@lawadv.org.uk](mailto:referrals@lawadv.org.uk)

### **The Traveller Movement**

Advice and peer support for women from Irish, Gypsy, or Roma Traveller backgrounds experiencing abuse.  
Call 0207 607 2002  
Email [info@travellermovement.org.uk](mailto:info@travellermovement.org.uk)

### **National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline (GALOP)**

Advice and support for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, or Intersex survivors.  
Call 0800 999 5248. Available from 10am to 5pm Monday, Tuesday, Friday 10 to 8pm Wednesday to Thursday  
Email [help@galop.org.uk](mailto:help@galop.org.uk)

### **Respect Men's Advice Line**

Advice and support for male survivors of Domestic Abuse.  
[Domestic Abuse Helpline for Men | Men's Advice Line UK](#)  
Call 0808 8010327- Monday–Friday 10am–5pm



# Agenda Item 10

Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent due to special circumstances and of which notice has been given to the Chief Executive.

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The Chairman to move that the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting during consideration of any items the publication of which would disclose exempt information.

**ANY REPORTS APPEARING AFTER THIS PAGE CONTAIN EXEMPT  
INFORMATION**

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# Agenda Item 13

Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent due to special circumstances and of which notice has been given to the Chief Executive.

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