



People and Health Overview Committee

Date: Monday, 15 September 2025
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue: Council Chamber, County Hall, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ

Members (Quorum: 3)

Beryl Ezzard (Chair), Louise Bown (Vice-Chair), Jindy Atwal, Alex Fuhrmann, Ryan Holloway, Stella Jones, Steve Murcer, Jon Orrell, Mike Parkes and Byron Quayle

Chief Executive: Catherine Howe, County Hall, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1XJ

For more information about this agenda please contact Democratic Services
Meeting Contact 01305 224185 - george.dare@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting, apart from any items listed in the exempt part of this agenda. If you would like to attend this meeting and have any specific requirements please contact the Democratic Services Officer named above.

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Agenda

Item	Pages
1. APOLOGIES	
To receive any apologies for absence.	
2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
To disclose any pecuniary, other registrable or non-registrable interest as set out in the adopted Code of Conduct. In making their disclosure councillors are asked to state the agenda item, the nature of the interest and any action they propose to take as part of their declaration.	
If required, further advice should be sought from the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.	
3. MINUTES	5 - 8

To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2025.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Representatives of town or parish councils and members of the public who live, work, or represent an organisation within the Dorset Council area are welcome to submit either 1 question or 1 statement for each meeting. You are welcome to attend the meeting in person or via Microsoft Teams to read out your question and to receive the response. If you submit a statement for the committee this will be circulated to all members of the committee in advance of the meeting as a supplement to the agenda and appended to the minutes for the formal record but will not be read out at the meeting. **The first 8 questions and the first 8 statements received from members of the public or organisations for each meeting will be accepted on a first come first served basis in accordance with the deadline set out below.** For further information read [Public Participation - Dorset Council](#)

All submissions must be emailed in full to george.dare@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk by 8.30am on Wednesday, 10 September 2025.

When submitting your question or statement please note that:

- You can submit 1 question or 1 statement.
- a question may include a short pre-amble to set the context.
- It must be a single question and any sub-divided questions will not be permitted.
- Each question will consist of no more than 450 words, and you will be given up to 3 minutes to present your question.
- when submitting a question please indicate who the question is for (e.g., the name of the committee or Portfolio Holder)
- Include your name, address, and contact details. Only your name will be published but we may need your other details to contact you about your question or statement in advance of the meeting.
- questions and statements received in line with the council's rules for public participation will be published as a supplement to the agenda.
- all questions, statements and responses will be published in full within the minutes of the meeting.

5. COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS

To receive questions submitted by councillors.

Councillors can submit up to two valid questions at each meeting and sub divided questions count towards this total. Questions and statements received will be published as a supplement to the agenda

and all questions, statements and responses will be published in full within the minutes of the meeting.

The submissions must be emailed in full to george.dare@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk by 8.30am on Wednesday, 10 September 2025.

[Dorset Council Constitution](#) – Procedure Rule 13

6. URGENT ITEMS

To consider any items of business which the Chairman has had prior notification and considers to be urgent pursuant to section 100B (4)b) of the Local Government Act 1972. The reason for the urgency shall be recorded in the minutes.

7. EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY

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To consider a report by the Service Manager for Housing Standards.

8. DORSET DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY 2025-2028

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To consider a report by the Programme Coordinator for Community Safety.

9. AGE FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

115 -
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To consider a report by the Corporate Director for Commissioning and Improvement.

10. COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME AND EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLANS

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To consider the Committee's Work Programme and the Executive Forward Plans.

11. EXEMPT BUSINESS

To move the exclusion of the press and the public for the following item in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the meaning of paragraph x of schedule 12 A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended). The public and the press will be asked to leave the meeting whilst the item of business is considered.

There are no exempt items scheduled for this meeting.

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PEOPLE AND HEALTH OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 7 JULY 2025

Present: Cllrs Beryl Ezzard (Chair), Louise Bown (Vice-Chair), Jindy Atwal, Alex Fuhrmann, Ryan Holloway, Stella Jones, Steve Murcer, Jon Orrell and Byron Quayle

Present remotely: Cllrs Mike Parkes

Also present: Cllr Shane Bartlett and Cllr Steve Robinson

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

George Dare (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Paul Dempsey (Executive Director of People - Children), Paula Golding (Corporate Director for Care and Protection), Rachel Partridge (Acting Director of Public Health), Amy-Jane White (Quality Assurance and Programme Lead) and Louis Wicks (Democratic Services Officer Apprentice)

Officers present remotely (for all or part of the meeting):

Julia Ingram (Corporate Director for Adult Social Care Operations)

10. Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

11. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

12. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 May 2025 were confirmed and signed.

13. Public Participation

There were no public questions.

14. Councillor Questions

There were no questions from councillors.

15. Urgent Items

There were no urgent items.

16. Families First for Children Pathfinder Update

The Executive Director for People – Children introduced the report. He outlined the council's involvement in the Families First pathfinder and that it was now supporting the national roll-out of the Family First delivery model for Children's Services. The Corporate Director for Care and Protection highlighted the key parts of the report and the changes that would need to be made by March 2026 to align with the national guidance.

The Committee discussed the report and asked questions of the officers. The following points were raised:

- There were no details of the funding allocations, although a national amount of money has been announced. The allocations were expected later in the year. It has been raised as a concern with the DfE.
- There was no indication on timing for the funding allocation. Last year the funding was allocated in late January.
- A member asked that the committee be updated when the funding allocations have been announced.
- Child protection conferences had changes made to them to make them more family friendly. Social workers chaired child protection conferences during a pilot; however, this was not favoured by families.
- The council had been given £190k to support the national roll-out of the Children's Services reforms.
- There would be options for contingencies in the Children's Services budget if there was not adequate funding. Cost efficiencies could be made through early intervention to reduce the number of high-cost placements.
- There are a new set of regulations for agency social workers. They will need to work in a Local Authority for 3 years before being able to join an agency.
- Families were finding it difficult to get the support they need with EHCP's. Officers advised they were reviewing support around EHCP's and they were also expecting a Government White Paper on their reform.
- Service levels and quality should remain the same if savings are made. Costs had been taken out of the placement budget due to early intervention.
- School nurses visit children on a child protection plan, which identifies new health needs.

The Committee would have an informal meeting to discuss contingency options in the children's services budget.

The Committee noted the report and supported maintaining the local Families First delivery model, alignment to national guidance, and the role as a Pathfinder Local Authority in supporting the Families First Pathfinder national programme.

17. **Committee's Work Programme and Cabinet's Forward Plan**

The Committee noted its work programme and the Cabinet Forward Plan.

Members were reminded that they could suggest items for the committee's work programme.

18. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 2.00 - 2.54 pm

Chairman

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People and Health Overview Committee

15 September 2025

Empty Homes Strategy

For Recommendation to Cabinet

Cabinet Member:

Cllr G Taylor, Health and Housing

Local Councillor(s):

Executive Director:

J Price, Executive Director of People - Adults

Report author and job title:

Steve March, Service Manager Housing Standards

Email:

steven.march@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Housing Act 2004

Report status: Public

1. Executive summary

1.1 Long term empty homes are a wasted housing resource that blight our communities. Removing barriers to get empty homes back into beneficial use as quickly as possible helps meet our high demand for housing, reduces pressure on new build development, improves our communities and provides a future income and asset for the owner.

1.2 The Empty Homes Strategy outlines how Dorset Council will work towards getting as many empty homes back into use as possible. The strategy outlines our progress to date, the local and national context, the targets we have set ourselves and how we will make progress, using our influence and where appropriate the available enforcement powers.

1.3 The strategy is informed by the Councils [Housing Strategy January 2024 to January 2029 - Dorset Council](#) and its delivery plan [Home in on Housing - Dorset Council](#) including helping to meet corporate objectives.

2. Recommendation

2.1 That the People and Health Overview Committee recommend to Cabinet that it approves the adoption of the Empty Homes Strategy.

3. Reason for the recommendation

3.1 To enable officers to work towards implementing the content of the Empty Homes Strategy, bringing long term empty homes back into beneficial use to meet the corporate aims of the Council and the aims of its [Housing Strategy January 2024 to January 2029 - Dorset Council](#).

3. The report

3.1 Dorset Council already has a good track record in its work to bring long term empty homes back into beneficial use. Our service is already highlighted in [national good practice guidance](#) and has been recognised for [national innovation awards](#). However, we feel that we can do more. The Empty Homes Strategy outlines our future aspirations which include:

- Work to incentivise and promote empty properties being brought back into use to help meet housing demand and grow our communities.
- Use all available options to bring long term empty homes back into use including advice, assistance, support and where appropriate, proportionate enforcement action.
- Develop a more proactive service, which will identify and tackle the 'hidden' long term empty homes
- Improve our outcomes, bringing more long-term empty homes back into beneficial use

3.2 The strategy sets clear targets, reporting requirements, oversight and an action plan which focusses on work to:

- Develop improved data management and intelligence about long term empty homes, enabling our work to be better targeted
- Target 'hidden' empty homes and get ahead of the problem, without the need for a case to be reported to us
- Further develop our proportionate enforcement options to tackle the worst cases
- Continue to raise the profile of long-term empty homes, how we can help and assist residents to report cases affecting their community

- Work with stakeholders to maximise our outcomes including colleagues in housing supply, Council Tax and our Town and Parish Councils
 - Help those bringing empty homes back into use, to do it in a way that helps to meet our net zero targets.
- 3.3 Operationally the strategy also provides officers with a clear mandate to act, using all necessary powers in a fair and proportionate manner.
- 3.4 In working towards the objectives of the strategy, most actions are informal and involve providing advice, assistance and support to property owners to encourage them to take the necessary steps to get the property occupied. The reasons for properties being left long term empty are linked to a wide range of issues. In most cases, officers work constructively with property owners to overcome these obstacles. Sometimes outcomes can be achieved quickly, however on other occasions the barriers are so complex that positive progress can take years. In an even smaller number of cases, it might be necessary to take formal legal action to take over the management or ownership of an abandoned home. In these cases, our responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty and the balance of the Human Rights of the owner and community, need to be carefully assessed.
- 3.5 While the strategy provides a direction and framework for our future action, specific legal or enforcement action is taken with regard to the [Housing Standards Enforcement Policy and Statement of Principles for Determining Financial Penalties - October 2023 - Dorset Council](#)
- 3.6 If a long-term empty property is acquired either voluntarily or via CPO powers, then the strategy promotes a close working relationship with colleagues in the Councils Assets and Property Team. This is in line with the processes set out in the Council's Strategic Asset Management Plan, including options appraisal, input and advice from Assets & Property colleagues and the relevant asset management officer advisory group.
4. **Alternative options considered**
- 4.1 There is no legal requirement for Councils to have an Empty Homes Strategy. Therefore, it is possible for this operational work to progress without such a strategy in place. This option has been discounted. The strategy provides clear direction and structure to this work over the short to medium term. It will enable officers to work towards meeting the objectives articulated in the strategy and as detailed above, a strategy of this type provides officers with a clear mandate to act, which is important when decisions can be subject to legal challenge.

5. Legal considerations

- 5.1 Action on long term empty homes falls into two distinct categories. Firstly, legal action to lessen the impact such properties may have on the local community from blight including pests, rubbish, unauthorised access, vandalism, squatting and overgrown gardens. We will always try to work with property owners to secure any necessary interim improvements of this type. However, where this proves unsuccessful and a residual risk exists, then the strategy promotes the use of a range of enforcement powers to bring about positive improvements. This action only manages the state and impact of the property in the short term.
- 5.2 Secondly, there is a further framework of powers which enable the Council to work towards the longer-term steps to bring the property back into beneficial use, either by purchase, taking over its management or enforced sale. This includes the Town and County Planning Act 1990 and other legal powers (Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) powers), the Housing Act 2004 (Empty Dwelling Management Order) and the Law of Property Act 1925 (Enforced Sale). We will always work with property owners to secure the beneficial use of the property, however where this proves unsuccessful and the property is considered a priority for further action, then the strategy promotes the use of these powers. The fact that the Council has the resources to even consider taking over the ownership or management of a property, is often sufficient for an owner to act much earlier in the process. Such action would be taken in consultation with the Council's legal services team.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 In support of this strategy, Dorset Council is currently allocating capital of £600,000 per year (25/26 to 27/28), reducing to £500,000 per year (28/29 to 29/30), for the purchase of long-term empty properties. This property acquisition may be by voluntary purchase or by Compulsory Purchase. It should be emphasised that acquisition of long-term empty properties by voluntary or compulsory purchase is an absolute last resort and if a property owner is willing to sell an empty home, in the first instance they will be encouraged to do so on the open market or via auction.
- 6.2 Since 2021 the Council has had need to acquire 3 long term empty properties voluntarily and 1 via a CPO. Case studies illustrating this type of work are detailed in the strategy.
- 6.3 In fulfilling the objectives of this strategy, there is close working relationships with other teams, including the Revenues and Benefits Service. Council Tax data is a key source of intelligence in identifying long term empty homes and tracing owners. The Housing Act 2004 provides specific legal powers for this

council tax data to be used in this way, effectively overriding the normal prohibitions on data sharing personal information. Empty homes work also helps to keep the council tax base 'up to date', helping to maximise council tax collection. The strategy seeks to quantify this benefit derived from empty homes intervention for its inclusion in regular and annual updates

7. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

- 7.1 Long term empty properties can have a significant impact on our local communities. By working to bring them back into beneficial use, it promotes the longer-term sustainable use of residential accommodation in our towns and villages, protecting our built environment.
- 7.2 Dorset Council has put climate and nature as a core priority in the Council Plan. This strategy will positively impact upon the achievement of these goals by promoting the longer-term sustainable use of existing built assets, mitigating the need for additional development (thereby alleviating the attendant emission and natural environmental impacts associated with new development); and setting as a strategic aim, the achievement of energy efficiency and climate resilience for homes we bring back into use wherever possible, through a commitment within the action plan to promote sustainable renovation practices through the production of guidance for those undertaking renovation works (and with recognition of the challenges to such in the case of heritage or listed assets).

8. Well-being and health implications

- 8.1 Long term empty properties can have a significant impact on our local communities. At an individual level, living near an empty property with the potential for vandalism, squatting or fly tipping has a significant detrimental effect on the local community, raising anxiety about the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour. Knowing that the Council will act in individual cases, provides residents with considerable reassurance that their concerns are being taken seriously and that where possible, short- and long-term improvements can be made.
- 8.2 At an individual level, dealing with a long-term empty property can be an extremely stressful situation for the property owner. The strategy recognises that in some cases our involvement and assistance given to the owner can be extremely positive, helping them to resolve property issues, dispose of assets, settle debts and generally move to a more stable position. We do not provide any legal or financial advice and owners are always advised to seek their own competent advice when making decisions.

9 Risk implications

- 9.1 Having considered the risks associated with this decision and strategy; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

10. Equalities

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed, and the assessment and action plan are attached at Appendix 2.
- 10.2 It is common for owners of long-term empty properties to also have protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. The EqIA identifies that for the protected characteristics of age, disability, people with caring responsibilities, socio-economic deprivation and armed forces communities, there is a need for some service amendments to ensure that the necessary reasonable adjustments to service delivery are identified and implemented.

11. Appendices

- 11.1 Appendix 1 - Draft Empty Homes Strategy
Appendix 2 - Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

12. Background papers

- 12.1 [Housing Standards Enforcement Policy and Statement of Principles for Determining Financial Penalties - October 2023 - Dorset Council](#)
[Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy 2024 - Dorset Council](#)
[A practical approach for councils on dealing with empty homes | Local Government Association](#)
[Housing Strategy January 2024 to January 2029 - Dorset Council](#)
[Home in on Housing - Dorset Council.](#)

13. Report sign-off

- 13.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

Empty Homes Strategy

‘Bringing unoccupied homes back into use’



Date of implementation: 9th October 2025
Date of review: 9th October 2027

Dorset Council - Empty Homes Strategy

‘Bringing unoccupied homes back into use’

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Strategic Aims, Data and Insight
3. Strategy Scope
4. The National Context
5. The Local Context
6. Our Approach – Support, Assistance and Enforcement
7. Measuring Impact
8. Equality
9. Human Rights

Appendix 1 Proposed Key Performance Indicators and Reports

Appendix 2 Case Studies

Appendix 3 Action Plan

Appendix 4 Enforcement powers

Appendix 5 – Our Approach - Support, Assistance and Enforcement (Flow Chart)

Appendix 6 - Glossary of Terms

Appendix 7 References and further information

Appendix 8 Summary of Equality Impact Assessment

1.0 Introduction

Long term empty properties are a wasted housing resource.

Empty properties can make an area feel run down and undermine community spirit. They can also become the focus for anti-social behaviour (ASB), fly tipping, vermin, and other criminal behaviour.

National and local housing shortages have created challenges for our residents. As house prices rise, some of our working-age residents are struggling to afford to live here. Our most vulnerable residents also find it difficult to find suitable homes.

Bringing an empty property back into beneficial use can not only resolve these environmental and social problems but also provides a new home. 'Bit by bit', this helps meet our high demand for housing, reduces pressure on new build development and provides a future income and asset for the owner.

Reducing the number of empty homes just makes sense.

It is a strategic priority of the [Dorset Council Plan 2024 to 2029](#) to provide affordable and high-quality housing. We recognise the importance of increasing the availability of affordable homes to meet the needs of local people, improving the existing housing stock, and ensuring sustainable development. It improves residents' health, the economy and our local environment.

The vision of the [Housing Strategy January 2024 to January 2029 - Dorset Council](#) is to ensure our residents have access to affordable, suitable, secure homes where they can live well as part of sustainable and thriving communities.

Action on empty homes forms a key theme of that strategy and our housing delivery plan.

We already have a good track record. Since 2019 we have

- responded to 836 requests to deal with long term empty homes.
- developed a wide range of assistance to help owners get their empty homes back into use.
- brought 52 long term empty homes back into use because of our direct action
- we have developed the processes to purchase long term empty homes, both voluntarily and by Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)
- we have voluntarily purchased 3 long term empty homes, bringing them back into use for temporary accommodation, supported housing or for immediate sale back onto the open market
- we have completed our first CPO
- our service is already recognised nationally as delivering 'best practice'

The Council will use its influence and where appropriate legal powers to continue to encourage the owners of empty, unoccupied properties to bring them back into beneficial use.

Homes become empty for many reasons. We have an important role to influence and provide solutions, tailored to the individual circumstances of each case. We will do this by continuing to provide a range of advice, incentives and signposting to other services. In appropriate circumstances, we will also use the full range of enforcement powers available to us.

We have already achieved a lot, we think we can do more. The strategy will outline our ambitions to

- better understand our empty home challenge, so that we can more effectively target our resources
- develop a more proactive service, which will identify and tackle the 'hidden' long term empty homes
- further develop our suite of enforcement sanctions to include Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO) and Enforced Sales
- work with all stakeholders, so that they share our ambition, especially when dealing with the most challenging cases
- identify where specific empty homes can directly contribute to meeting our affordable housing need through assisting property owners directly into schemes such as Key4Me and property leasing.

2.0 Strategic Aims

The Council will:

- Work to incentivise and promote empty properties being brought back into use to help meet housing demand and grow our communities.
- Use all available options to bring long term empty homes back into use including advice, assistance, support and where appropriate, proportionate enforcement action.
- Develop a more proactive service, which will identify and tackle the 'hidden' long term empty homes
- Improve our outcomes bringing more long-term empty homes back into beneficial use

2.1 Data and Insight

The Council will:

- Maintain a detailed database to monitor and target empty properties for action. This will include data provided by the public, other agencies including our town and parish councils and internal stakeholders including Revenues and Benefits.
- Ensure our information is regularly updated with the status of each property, enabling timely updates on progress, outcomes and trends.

2.2 Engagement, Support and Enforcement

The Council will:

- Contact property owners to understand why homes are empty and offer support to bring them back into beneficial use.
- Develop projects to create a more proactive service, which will identify and tackle more 'hidden' long term empty homes.
- Provide financial incentives to enable properties to be improved, renovated and ready for occupation.
- Provide professional, independent and unbiased advice on potential routes to bring properties back into beneficial use.
- Continue to work in partnership with other housing services, providers and partners to explore how we may contribute to a wide range of housing and other council corporate priorities. For example, using empty homes to provide temporary accommodation, homes for care leavers, providing a home for those with a disability or accommodating people on the Council's housing register.
- Where appropriate, we will use a range of proportionate enforcement powers to reduce the short-term impact of abandoned homes and work towards bringing those houses back into beneficial use (See **Appendix 3**)
- Work in an intelligence led way, acting on reports, referrals and requests from all stakeholders. Case investigation, progression including regulatory action will be based on a range of priority criteria. For example, the effect that the property has on the local community, its location, type and size, condition, repair costs, demand for housing in that area, relevant human rights issues and equality considerations.

2.3 Public Awareness

The Council will:

- Work to raise public awareness (such as the [National Empty Homes Week](#) and other initiatives) to highlight the issue of empty homes, encourage reporting and the benefits of bringing empty homes back into use.
- Encourage the public to report empty homes by providing a range of simple reporting mechanisms [Information for those affected by empty homes - Dorset Council](#)
- Work in partnership with a range of local stakeholders to promote reporting of empty homes, bringing houses back into use and reducing their impact on communities including working closely with our town and parish councils.

2.4 Monitoring and Review

The Council will:

- Annually review this strategy, and identify new opportunities, amending the strategy as needed.
- Set clear performance indicators to measure success, identify risks and monitor our activity (see **Appendix 1**)
- Annually review an action plan for our future work, ensuring that we continue to maximise the resources at our disposal, exploit all the opportunities available to us and drive outcome and success in our work (see **Appendix 3**)

2.5 Sustainable Solutions

The Council will:

- aim to achieve a high level of energy efficiency for homes we bring back into use, recognising that net zero will not always be possible in every case.
- Integrate this strategy with the broader [Housing Strategy 2024-2030](#) to ensure long-term sustainability and alignment to wider Council priorities.

3.0 Strategy Scope

3.1 What is a long-term empty property?

In explaining and shaping the work of this strategy, it is useful to understand what a *long-term empty home* is. Conversely it is useful to understand what buildings will normally fall outside of this strategy.

Different statutory provisions use different criteria for what constitutes a *long-term empty home*. This can range from 6 months to 2 years empty.

It is our experience that those properties which have been unoccupied for shorter periods of time, for example up to 2 years empty, are more likely to be subject to a variety of ‘churn’ and ongoing or delayed efforts to bring them back into beneficial use. Also, they are less likely to have deteriorated and be causing significant distress or nuisance to communities.

Properties which have been empty and unoccupied for 2 years or more are at risk of remaining empty for long periods of time. This increases the likelihood they will impact our communities with disrepair, overgrown gardens, rubbish, vermin and ASB.

Therefore, while the council has the power to deal with some empty homes from 6 months empty, to prioritise work under this strategy and to enable accurate and meaningful reporting, properties which have been empty for 2 years or more will be considered *long term empty* under this strategy.

Definition: for the purposes of this strategy, a long-term empty home is a residential premises which has not been occupied for 2 years or more.

A ‘residential premises’ is any dwelling, house or flat which is rated for Council Tax purposes. The residential element of mixed-use buildings are within the scope of this strategy i.e. a long-term empty flat over a shop.

This definition focuses on the use and occupation of the building. It is applied irrespective of the property’s current Council Tax status or other factors including whether the property is furnished.

Therefore, this definition incorporates a wide range of unoccupied residential premises which includes what might be termed ‘hidden’ empty homes, such as

- unoccupied buildings categorised as *second homes* for Council Tax purposes,
- ‘*sham*’ *second homes*,
- residential premises delisted from the Council Tax register,
- homes where the former occupant has died, and
- houses empty as the occupant has moved into long term care.

Definition: for the purposes of this strategy, a long-term empty home can include a ‘*sham*’ *second home*. This is a residential premises which the owner states is a *second home* for council tax purposes, but it is not occupied for any period.

3.2 What isn't a long-term empty home?

The following is a list of residential and other buildings which will normally fall outside of the scope of this strategy:

Properties used and occupied for short periods as commercial holiday lets including Airbnb.

Definition: for the purposes of this strategy, a holiday let is any dwelling normally occupied for short periods of time on a commercial basis.

For the purposes of Council Tax, a holiday let is valued for Business Rates if:

- in the last 12 months the property has been available to let commercially for short periods of at least 140 nights; and
- the property will be available to let commercially for short periods of at least 140 nights in the next 12 months; and
- in the last 12 months the property has actually been let commercially as self-catering accommodation for short periods of 70 nights or more

Genuine second homes, used by their owners and others from time to time.

Definition: for the purposes of this strategy, a *second home* is any furnished dwelling which is not a person's main residence but is occupied from 'time to time'. There is no minimum period that a second home must be occupied. However, under the terms of this strategy, to be a *genuine* second home, it must be occupied for at least some periods of time.

For Council Tax purposes, a property is a *second home* when it is substantially furnished, and nobody uses it as their only or main home. The Council Tax definition focusses on the furnishing of the property, not its use or occupation. Under the Council Tax provisions, there is no minimum period that a second home must be occupied.

Note - There is a distinction to be made between what could be termed a *genuine second home*, used periodically by its owners, which falls outside of this strategy and an empty, unused 'second home', which is *never* occupied and is 'in scope' for the purposes of this strategy.

Empty buildings used for non-domestic purposes, in other words commercial property such as long-term empty offices and shops.

Homes which have been unoccupied for less than 2 years. In some circumstances the Council has the legal power to deal with properties which have been empty and unoccupied for at least 6 months. While the Council may want to use its discretion to act upon empty homes which have been unoccupied for between 6 months and 2 years, this strategy will focus action and reporting on homes which have been empty and unoccupied for at least 2 years.

Homes unoccupied following the death of the occupant and a clear and active plan to obtain probate or letters of administration are in place.

Homes unoccupied due to the occupant receiving or providing care elsewhere and the occupant is likely to return to live at the property in the near future.

3.3 Why are homes left long-term empty?

Homes are left long-term empty for wide variety of reasons. Understanding the background for a dwellings lack of use, enables officers to better target their response. However, in a significant minority of cases, despite reasonable investigation, the full reasons for a properties empty status can still be unclear or difficult to understand. In some cases, it may include one or several of the below factors.

- **Financial** - Many homes are left vacant due to financial constraints, whether it's a lack of funds for repairs or renovations, or owners choosing to leave properties empty as part of an investment strategy (e.g., "buy-to-leave"). Listed Buildings are at high risk of abandonment, due to the high repair costs and perceived planning constraints.
- **Inheritance and Probate**- The death of a property owner can lead to delays in transferring ownership due to probate processes and the need to determine beneficiaries. Sometimes next of kin are not clearly identifiable. We also recognise that some beneficiaries find it very difficult to progress with the estate of the deceased. This can be due to family disagreements and emotional connections to the property and its possessions.
- **Care** - Properties can become empty when owners move into hospital, nursing homes, or other care facilities. Some owners lack the capacity to make decisions about how their home and other assets are dealt with.
- **Abandoned Second Homes and Sham Second Homes**- Second homes, particularly in some of our areas with high tourist demand, can become abandoned by the owner. This can happen as owners needs change. These second homes are never used and there is no intention to do so. *Sham second homes* are sometimes created by owners to circumvent the Council Tax premiums.
- **Investment Strategies** - Some individuals may purchase properties with no intention of living in them or renting them, but instead, hold them for future sale with the hope of profit.
- **Delays in Planning and Development**. Renovation projects, property conversions and even new-build homes can be left empty for various reasons, including delays due to planning permissions, construction issues and/or finances.
- **Lack of Urgency or Knowledge** Some owners may procrastinate on renovating or upgrading a property, while others may lack the knowledge or expertise to effectively manage the process.
- **Lack of Vision** - Owners might not fully recognise the potential of their property, whether it's to provide housing or generate capital or a regular income.

3.4 Counting long term empty homes

Accurately counting the number of long-term empty homes, both nationally and locally is complex. Council Tax data of long-term empty homes is only one source of information. As empty and unoccupied homes can extend across more than one Council Tax category, the true number of long-term empty homes is the sum of a combination of several different data sources (Figure 1).

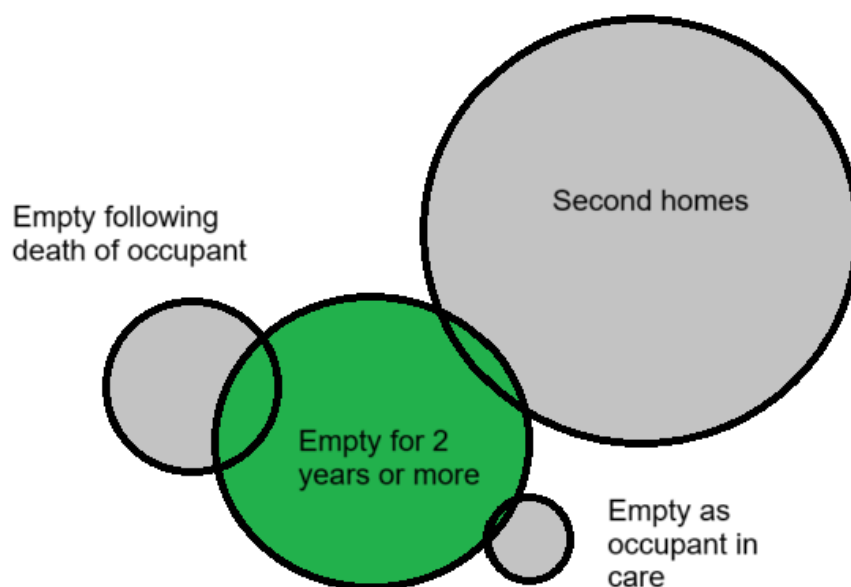


Figure 1: The number of long-term empty homes is the sum of several different data sources. This includes 'hidden' empty homes

4.0 The National Context

4.1 Background

The national Council Taxbase reports annually on empty and unoccupied homes. In 2024 it identified just over 502,000 properties reported as empty. This constitutes a year-on-year increase from 479,000 in 2020.

In 2024, of those empty properties, 119,606 were being charged a Council Tax Premium indicating that they have been long term empty for at least 12 months. This figure has been rising consistently across the country since 2020, indicating that empty homes is a growing national issue.

4.2 Guidance and good practice

There is currently no national strategy to tackle the issue of long-term empty homes.

The Local Government Association (LGA) recognised in recent guidance '[A practical approach for councils on dealing with empty homes](#)' that "Against a backdrop of significant pressure to meet increasing housing demand, councils are increasingly exploring other opportunities to meet shortfalls in supply." They also report that with resources being tight, many Councils have historically only chosen to act on long term empty homes in a reactive

way. In publishing this guidance, the LGA sought to change this stance to encourage more proactive empty homes work and the use of a wider range of options available to Council's, both in terms of assistance, advice and enforcement powers.

*"Councils across England are deemed to be best placed to tackle the issue of empty homes through encouraging and supporting their owners to bring them back into use, and to enforce against owner and property where their condition or effect is to the detriment of a neighbour or community. However, dealing with an empty home is not a statutory function that councils are duty bound to provide."*²

In 2023 Crisis, the national charity for people experiencing homelessness, called for a [concerted effort to repurpose long-term empty properties](#) through a number of measures, including a partnership approach to developing a National Empty Homes Initiative.

4.3 Long Term Empty Homes and Council Tax Premium

The council tax system in England allows councils to charge higher rates for properties that have been empty for certain periods of time. This is often referred to as the Empty Home Premium. The aim of this premium charge is to encourage owners to bring their empty properties back into use.

Over recent years the ability of councils to charge this premium has been enhanced and is based on the period the property has been unoccupied. Currently in Dorset the 100% premium charge (or double Council Tax) is payable from one year empty and unoccupied. Properties empty and unoccupied for 5 or more years are liable for a 200% premium charge (or triple Council Tax). Properties empty and unoccupied for 10 years or more are liable to a 300% premium charge (or quadruple Council Tax).

4.4 New Homes Bonus

The New Homes Bonus (NHB) was introduced by Government in 2011, with the aim of encouraging local authorities to grant planning permissions for the building of new houses in return for additional revenue.

The New Homes Bonus is a grant paid by central government to local councils to reflect and incentivise housing growth in their areas. It is based on the amount of extra Council Tax revenue raised for new-build homes, conversions and long-term empty homes brought back into use. There is also an extra payment for providing affordable homes.

2025/26 could be the last year of New Homes Bonus, however a final decision on this is yet to be announced by government.

5.0 The Local Context

5.1 Background

In July 2024 there were 1463 properties on the Council Tax register which were classified as empty for 6 months or more. Of these 816 properties had been unoccupied for 12 months or more and were therefore liable to pay the Empty Home Premium. The breakdown of Council Tax empty home classification and the number of years empty is detailed below.

This data only provides an indication of the number of empty and unoccupied homes. It is likely to underestimate the true number of empty homes in our communities, as it does not

include other possible categories such as abandoned second homes and properties where the liable person has died and no steps are being taken to obtain probate.

Period empty and unoccupied	Number of properties	Council Tax Premium
6 months up to 1 year	647	Standard rate
1 to up to 2 years	203	100% premium (double CT)
2 to up to 5 years	125	100% premium (double CT)
5 to up to 10 years	33	200% (triple CT)
10+ years	12	300% (quadruple CT)
Total	1020	

Table 1 Empty Property in Dorset Council Tax Base (August 2024) by payment of Council Tax Premium only.

New empty homes cases for investigation are generally identified from two main sources. Firstly, reports from the public and other stakeholders and secondly, we are developing our proactive work undertaken using data sources such as council tax and other available lists.

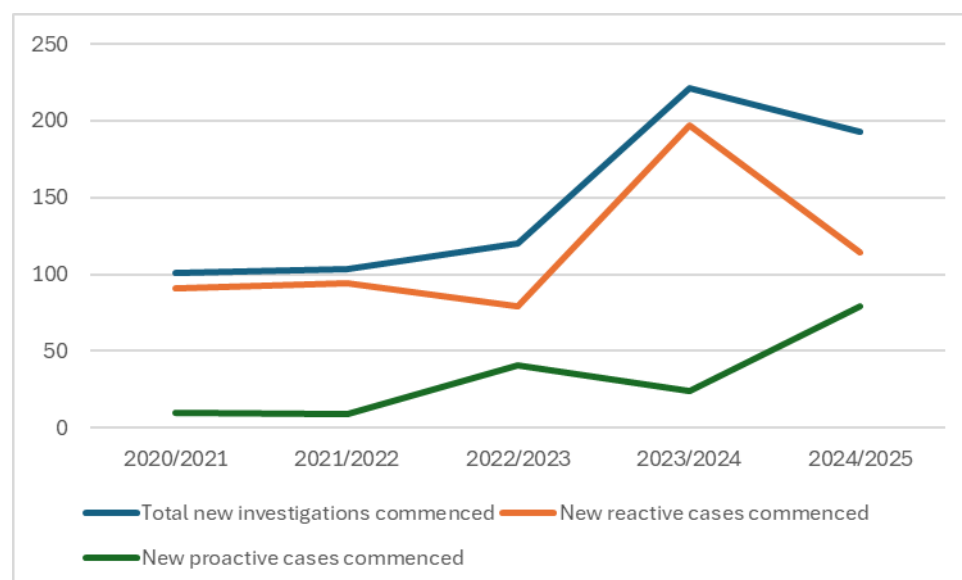


Figure 2: The total number of new investigations commenced each year, including new reactive and proactive cases.

5.2 Outcomes and performance

In the last 4 years, 53 long term empty homes have been brought back into beneficial use as a direct result of action instigated by Dorset Council. (Figure 3)

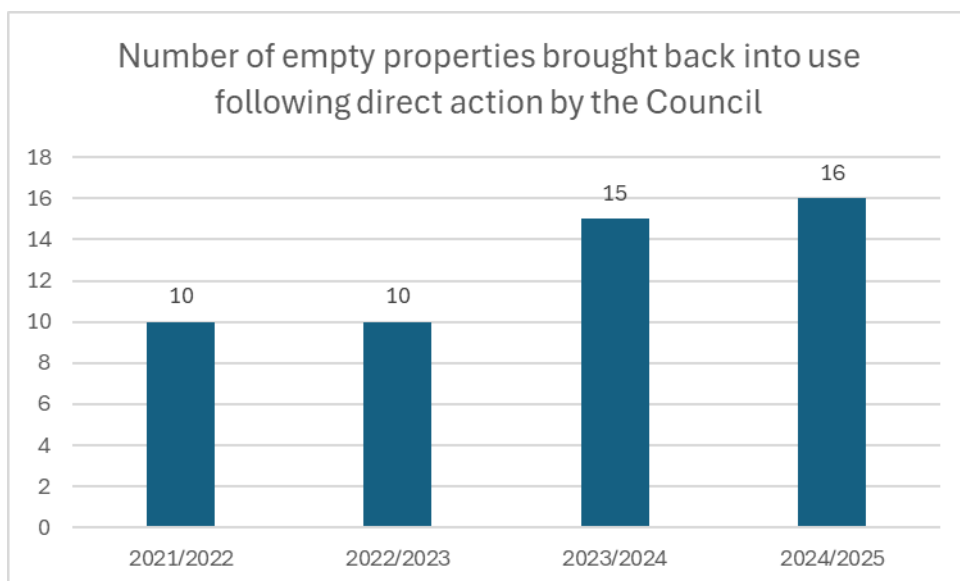


Figure 3: the number of empty properties bought back into use. (2024/25 data does not include Q4).

Our ambition is to increase our output of empty homes brought back into use by our direct action.

6.0 Our Approach - Support, Assistance and Enforcement

In working towards bringing long term empty homes back into use, no single process of support, assistance and enforcement is consistently and reliably effective in every case.

Each empty property and each empty property owner are different. Each set of circumstances which led to a property being long term empty varies from case to case. This then requires a bespoke use of the below tools, at the right time, in the right way, to unlock a case and encourage the owner to act positively.

At one extreme, a small amount of timely advice and assistance from us can achieve results over a short timescale of months. More complex cases can require extensive work, building constructive, positive relationships with the owner, which can sometimes require formal enforcement action, if that is deemed appropriate and proportionate. Such action, used in a small minority of the most complex cases, can take years to progress to a positive outcome.

Appendix 4 outlines an example of our approach, using support, assistance and enforcement as a flow diagram.

6.1 Support and assistance

In the early stages of engagement, Dorset Council will use a wide variety of action to help owners bring their long-term empty homes back into beneficial use. This offer of support is provided to most if not all live cases. What is suitable will vary from 'case to case' and can include:

- Assistance in accessing [VAT reductions](#) for renovation work to properties that have been empty for 2 years or more.
- Access to the councils direct [leasing scheme](#) and [Key4Me](#) landlord incentive scheme when a property owner provides affordable rented accommodation to the Council

- Access to a range of repayment loans from our ethical, not for profit lender, [Lendology](#)
- Advice on a range of issues including planning requirements, listed building, building regulation and other regulatory requirements which need to be addressed to bring properties back into use
- Advice on the benefits of ongoing property use and letting, versus the cost of leaving a house empty
- Help and encouragement in applying for probate or letters of administration.
- Advice about reducing the impact that an empty property has on a local area, while steps are taken to bring it back into use.
- Assessing all options to bring the property back into use including voluntary purchase where budgets permit

In most cases, this type of supportive approach will be sufficient to ensure action to bring the property back into beneficial use (see figure 4 below)

6.2 Enforcement

Where support, advice and assistance provided to an owner has failed to lead to positive action or the property owner cannot be identified, we will consider whether the empty property and the circumstances associated with it, warrants formal action.

These formal powers are likely to be necessary in a smaller number of case (see figure 4 below). This action can take various forms, and it mainly includes action to:

- Reduce or manage the impact that the empty property is having on the local community.
- Longer term steps to bring the property back into beneficial use using a change in ownership or management.

A list of possible enforcement interventions are set out in **Appendix 4** of this strategy which should be read in conjunction with the [Housing Standards Enforcement Policy and Statement of Principles for Determining Financial Penalties - October 2023 - Dorset Council](#)

6.3 Case Prioritisation

It will not always be possible or appropriate to take enforcement action. Such action will be prioritised on a minority of cases. In deciding its priorities and the most appropriate course of action, the Council will amongst other matters have regard to a wide range of relevant factors including:

- The response of the property owner.
- The length of time the property has been empty.
- The impact of the empty property on the neighbourhood and the level of justified complaint.
- Housing need in the area for the accommodation.
- The size, condition and location of the property, including its heritage status
- The likely cost of bringing the empty property back into use.
- Any debts or other charges secured on the property.
- The views of the owner and their intended use for the property including any timescale.
- The views of neighbours and other residents.
- The availability of funding to progress.

- The human rights considerations of taking enforcement action, both for the property owner and affected residents.
- Considering if the property owner has any protected characteristics under equality legislation and what reasonable adjustments to service delivery might be considered appropriate.

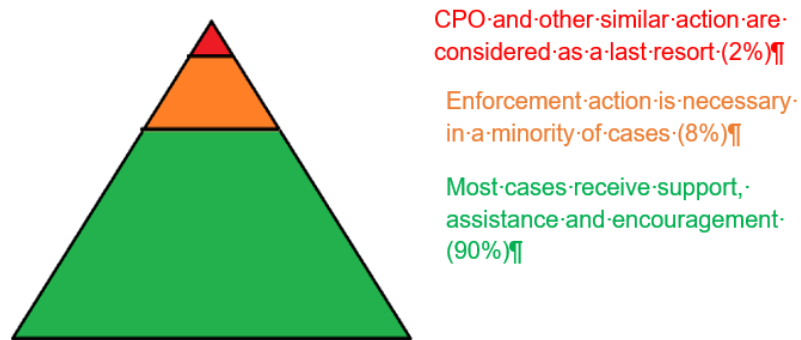


Figure 4: a diagram to illustrate the proportion of cases which can be resolved with informal advice and assistance, versus the proportion requiring formal legal action.

6.4 Resources

To meet the aims of this strategy, facilitate enforcement action and where necessary, to acquire long term empty property (both voluntarily or through compulsory purchase), sufficient financial resources need to be available.

6.4.1 Capital

From 2020 to 2028, to meet the aims of this strategy the Council has committed up to £3.7M of capital funding targeted for voluntarily or compulsory purchase of long-term empty properties.

While this capital funding may on average enable in the region of 10 long term empty properties to be acquired, the mere presence of the Councils ability to take this type of action has a significant impact. It acts as motivation for property owners to engage with us and creates a tangible deterrent. Overall, this significantly reduces the likelihood of having to take actions of last resort, such as a CPO. Therefore, the impact of this funding is felt far beyond the small number of empty properties which we finally purchase.

6.4.2 Revenue

Enforcement and other action may also result in 'one off' revenue costs. This includes carrying out 'works in default' of an enforcement notice. This occurs for example, where the we are dealing with an absent owner, and it is appropriate and necessary for the Council to carry out works itself, which it has required the owner to perform.

This is often necessary to protect residents and our communities from more immediate risks and the high impact empty homes can sometimes have. This revenue expenditure is currently funded from existing approved budgets.

6.5 Financial assistance and Loans

The Council offers repayment loans of up to £25,000 per unit of accommodation to bring empty properties back into use, from its 'not for profit', ethical lender; [Lendology](#). Further details of the financial assistance available, eligibility and conditions can be found in the [Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy 2024 - Dorset Council](#).

To meet our corporate objectives, the availability of financial assistance for long term empty homes is based on there being a wider public benefit to returning the property to beneficial use including at least one of the following:

- bringing an empty property back into use which has been unoccupied for at least 6 months and there is no realistic proposition of it coming back into beneficial use in the near future.
- helping the Council to meet housing need by setting rent at or below Local Housing Allowance rates and remain available for an agreed period likely to be equal to the period of the loan.
- providing nomination rights to the Council for an agreed period normally 5 years. This can be achieved via direct nomination or via the Councils Leasing Scheme

Where there is identified housing need for a specific type of accommodation, in a geographical area, the Council may approve a discretionary grant to support a loan, subject to individual approval by the Corporate Director for Housing and Community Safety. This would normally be in conjunction with an agreed offer of nomination rights or lease from the property owner, for the use of the property by the Council for affordable rent over an extended period, likely to be more than the 5-year nomination period outlined above.

6.6 Finders and Genealogy Service

The Council has procured the services of a 'Finder and Genealogy' provider. This contract enables the Council to use the skills and knowledge of professional researchers to trace the owners of abandoned homes and assist in finding the next of kin to unclaimed estates, that include long term empty homes.

The aim of this service is to increase the speed and accuracy of tracing owners and next of kin, providing new lines of enquiry and increasing the likelihood of long-standing complex cases being progressed to a successful conclusion.

6.7 Working with Stakeholders

6.7.1 Revenues and Benefits

The Council incentivises the owners of long-term empty properties to bring them back into use. It has adopted national enabling powers to charge a Council Tax Premium on homes empty and unfurnished for more than 12 months.

To ensure Council Tax records are maintained and 'up to date', the Revenue and Benefits Team normally carry out an Empty Property Review. This data is shared and informs the work of this strategy.

Establishing the use and occupation of a property for the purposes of this strategy can sometimes be challenging. This is especially the case where properties change between Council Tax classifications such as 'empty home', 'second home' and occupied. This strategy promotes timely data sharing and liaison with the Councils Revenues and Benefits Service, ensuring records are kept 'up to date' about properties of interest and enabling more seamless service delivery between teams.

6.7.2 Planning, Conservation, Environmental Protection and Building Control

Long term empty properties can pose a wide variety of environmental and wider social issues to communities. Acting on the impact of empty homes and bringing them back into use often requires a 'joined up' approach including a range of council services.

This strategy recognises the need for and encourages this type of approach, to enable issues to be addressed and properties brought back into use in the timeliest way.

Where long term empty properties are also Listed Buildings, we will work closely with the Councils Conservation Team to ensure that a successful outcome is achieved, which retains and conserves the historic interest of the building.

6.7.3 Strategic Asset Management

Where the Council is proposing to acquire a long-term empty property, either via voluntary or compulsory purchase, then prior to completion and as early as possible in the acquisition process, the case will be subject to asset review. This will be in line with the process set out in the Council's Strategic Asset Management Plan, including options appraisal, input and advice from Assets & Property colleagues and the relevant asset management officer advisory group.

This process will ensure that any acquisition and subsequent decisions about the disposal or repurposing of the former long term empty property are consistent with the council's Strategic Asset Management Plan and Council Plan.

7.0 Measuring Impact

A range of performance indicators are detailed in **Appendix 1**. Performance indicators aim to be simple, measurable and allow oversight of the progress of this strategy.

The performance indicators have been set with reference to the current and projected capacity of the service. Should this change, it would be necessary to review the strategy, its associated Action Plan and Performance Indicators.

8.0 Equality

In setting out this strategy, offering services and taking enforcement action, we are committed to ensuring that no one associated with the action we take or don't take is discriminated against because of any protected characteristic including age, disability, race, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief or sexual orientation.

Actions to bring empty properties back into use will be administered in accordance with the Council's [Equality scheme](#). In acting, including enforcement action against property owners with protected characteristics, we are committed to making any necessary reasonable adjustments to our services, this may include, but is not limited to:

- Asking empty homeowners at an early stage if they have any difficulties in engaging with our service and how we can adjust our provision accordingly.
- Encouraging property owners to seek help from family, friends or an advocate. This also includes professional, independent advice such as a solicitor.
- In appropriate circumstances and normally with the agreement of the property owner, speaking to the next of kin and other family members about the situation.
- Offering a wide range of help and assistance as detailed above, at all stages, to positively assist in resolving the issues arising.
- Offering property owners the chance to be independently represented at any meetings.
- Where appropriate postponing action to allow recipients of our service more time to consider their position.
- Providing communication in a format and type which is suitable to the recipient.
- Liaising with other services to ensure as far as is possible we understand the wider situation that may affect the property owner, including but not limited to Council Tax,

Adult Social Care, Housing, Dorset Council Deferred Payments Team and Community Mental Health Services

- Being mindful that the owners of empty properties maybe vulnerable to exploitation from others.

A summary of the strategies Equality Impact Assessment is detailed at Appendix 8.

9.0 Human Rights

The Council is obliged to act in a way which is compatible with the European Convention on Human Rights. The Convention Rights relevant to this strategy include:

Article 1 (of the First Protocol) - This protects the right of everyone to the peaceful enjoyment of possessions. No one can be deprived of possessions except in the public interest and subject to the relevant national and international laws.

Article 8 (of the Convention) - This protects private and family life, home, and correspondence. No public authority can interfere with these interests except if it is in accordance with the law and is necessary in the interests of national security, public safety, or the economic wellbeing of the country.

Article 14 (of the Convention) - This protects the right to enjoy rights and freedoms in the Convention free from discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, or national or social origin.

Prior to taking any action and in particular legal action, the Council will carefully consider if there is a compelling case in the public interest which justifies interfering with the human rights of any person associated with the ownership of a long-term empty property.

In each case it will be necessary to demonstrate that the benefits of our action and the benefits of bringing an empty house back into use outweigh the loss that will be suffered by the empty homeowner. Only when these assessments show a presumption in favour of acting will the use of our powers be proportionate and considered to be compatible with the European Convention on Human Rights.

Appendix 1 Proposed Key Performance Indicators and Reports

	Proposed Key Performance Indicators
Number of long-term empty properties brought back into use as a direct result of Council action.	Increase the number of empty properties brought back into beneficial use 25/26 15 properties 26/27 and onwards 20 properties per year <u>Notes</u> Initial increasing target linked to new officer capacity from 24/25. ‘Council action’ means any step or process taken which can be evidenced as bringing about a positive change that caused the property to be brought back into beneficial use. Coincidental results and outcomes including properties that were coming back into use anyway are not counted in this metric. Current average performance since 2021 is 13 properties per year. Bringing empty homes back into use can take a prolonged period, leading to some variation in outcomes in each year.
Monthly recording and monitoring of the number of properties liable to pay the Long Term Empty Homes Premium and Class F exemption (death of the liable person) which have been empty for 2 years or more.	Monthly report (for internal strategy management purposes) <u>Notes</u> Although the number of long-term empty homes is subject to external market forces, which are outside of the control of the Council, reporting on the number of properties liable to pay the empty home premium or possessing the Class F exemption (for 2 years or more), provides a clear trend of changing numbers over time and can enable resources to be directed effectively.
Quarterly report of the number of ongoing / open investigations of empty properties by Housing Standards.	Quarterly report (for internal strategy management purposes) <u>Notes</u> This metric measures the ongoing level of cases under investigation at any one time by Housing Standards. It is a useful measure of the demand, response and activity levels of the service.
Annual activity report including the above and detailing formal and informal action relating to long term empty property and associated capital and revenue expenditure	Annual activity report to Portfolio Holder Health and Housing and the ‘Home in on Housing’ Board <u>Notes</u> Enforcement action includes any legal notice issued with the aim of managing the impact of an empty home or served with the intention of bringing it back into use. This includes Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO), enforced sale and Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO). Informal action includes positive steps other than enforcement action which have resulted in the property being brought back into use including the provision of loan assistance and voluntary purchase. Multiple actions may occur on the same property

The performance indicators have been set with reference to the current and projected capacity of the service. Should this change, it would be necessary to review the strategy, its associated Action Plan and Performance Indicators.

Appendix 2 Case Studies

Voluntary purchase and renovation for Dorset Council temporary accommodation



West View, Blandford Forum had been empty and abandoned for many years. Ground floor windows and doors were boarded up and the front courtyard overgrown.

The buildings' journey from eyesore to home took just under three years for the Empty Homes Team to complete. In that time the owners were traced, the purchase negotiated, funding acquired for the renovation, the necessary works specified, a contractor appointed, and the work completed.

The building now provides a safe, warm home for 6 local people in urgent housing need. 'On site' support from Dorset Council staff, provided from a private ground floor office enables occupants to be supported onto the next stage of their journey to a more permanent home.

Temporary accommodation of this kind was in short supply in this part of the county, and West View provided a real boost to Dorset Councils local housing offer.

West View represented a win, win, win for Dorset Council and residents. A long-term empty home was renovated and restored to use. Much needed temporary accommodation was delivered. There is also a long-term saving on temporary bed and breakfast costs.

Financial Assistance working with Lendology

This listed building in West Street, Blandford Forum, had been empty for decades and the owners were paying the Empty Homes Premium.

The owners had plans for the renovation and reuse of the building but were unable to fully fund the project. The Council worked with its ethical lender; Lendology, to develop a package of loan and other funding to make sure that the renovation could complete.

As part of the funding agreement, the owners provided the council with tenant nomination rights, so that the newly converted home would be used for affordable temporary accommodation. To make the letting and management of the property as seamless as possible, the owners joined the councils direct leasing scheme for the entire nomination period.

This case study shows how Dorset Council can use financial assistance to not only rescue a listed building but bring it back into use for much needed affordable housing.



Compulsory Purchase Order



This semi-detached house in Bridport had been empty for over 10 years. The Council spent time trying to contact and negotiate with the owner over its renovation and reuse. During this time, the property caused ongoing complaint about the fact it was empty and the garden overgrown.

As a last resort, after all other options had been exhausted, the Council commenced a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) to take ownership of the house, so that it could be brought back into beneficial use. Following the prescribed legal process, while the Council continued to try to negotiate with the owner, the ownership of the house finally vested with Dorset Council in early 2025.

Properties subject to CPO may sometimes be sold back onto the open market as quickly as possible, but as in this case, the aim is that it is repurposed for affordable housing.

Appendix 3 Action Plan

	Aim	Action	Expected outcomes	Completion
1	Data Review of existing empty homes data including all reactive and proactive data sources, storage and management	• Develop a system for prioritising cases for action based on the themes of this strategy • Review the use of the current Housing Standards database for recording empty property information • Identify any new data sources • Create and manage a data management system enabling the management of KPI's and reports outlined in this strategy • Quantify the increased Council Tax liability achieved from the work of this strategy	• Improved data about long-term empty homes • Greater understanding of the issues and associated trends • Ability to provide timely activity and management reports • Better targeting of resources • Understand the wider benefits of the strategy including increasing Council Tax revenue.	31 December 2025 and ongoing
2	Targeting 'hidden empty homes'	• Develop the proactive work of the service including: ○ Council Tax Class F exempt dwellings – long term empty following the death of the occupant and empty 2 years or more ○ Empty properties owned by rural estates	• Target work on hidden' empty homes • Increase in Council Tax liability and revenue as Class F exemptions are not liable for CT	Report in first annual review
3	Enforcement	• Develop our understanding and use of the full range of legal processes to bring empty homes back into use using enforcement powers including: ○ Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO) ○ Enforced Sales • Identify target properties where such enforcement action is appropriate and implement action where legal basis and resources permit.	• Develop our formal response to complex long term empty properties to include all possible legal powers including EDMO and Enforced Sales • Ability to take formal action against a wider range of high profile, problematic empty homes	Report in first annual review
4	Engagement	• Review and maintain the website content for empty homes ensuring that the information	• Encourages and helps the owners of empty property by providing a high-	31 December 2025 and ongoing

	Provide and maintain good quality communication about the challenge of long-term empty homes in Dorset.	provided is up to date, appropriate and accurate. • Participation in the annual Empty Homes Week including social media, press releases and other initiatives. • Review all correspondence to ensure that communication is accessible, clear, includes all necessary detail, creating new necessary standard communications where appropriate.	quality information to help them bring properties back into use. • Ensures that stakeholders can easily report incidents of empty homes • Enables customers to self-serve without increasing unnecessary demands on back office and operational staff • Remove barriers to residents accessing this service • Ensure that empty homeowners can fully engage in the service	February 2026 and annually 31 December 2025 and ongoing
5	Monitoring and Review Carryout an annual review of the strategy looking at the progress against the key performance indicators.	• Review the strategy, aims, KPI and reporting mechanisms to check progress. • Investigate the feasibility of benchmarking opportunities with other local authorities of a similar size and stock profile etc providing a comparable empty home service	• Ensures that the strategy is a live process, kept up to date, able to track progress, assess risks and opportunities. • Monitor performance, outcomes and develop best practice opportunities.	Annually 31 March 2026
6	Resources Maintain suitable and sufficient capital and revenue funding to support the aims of this strategy and investigate options to grow the service	• Revenue Investigate the feasibility of a specific revenue budget for essential enforcement expenditure including works in default • Capital • Keep under review and up to date reporting of capital spend on managing the impact of and acquiring long term empty properties. • Investigate potential internal and external funding sources with a view to maintaining and expanding the outputs and outcomes of this strategy	• Ongoing use of proportionate and necessary enforcement work and expenditure to support the aims of this strategy. • Determine how capital, revenue and staff funding impacts on outcomes and outputs, including where appropriate devising business cases to maintain or expand the work of this strategy.	Ongoing – report at annual review

7	Partnerships To work with internal stakeholders including Council Tax to review where the provision of services can complement the aim of bringing empty homes back into use	• Quarterly liaison with Council Tax and Revenues Team • Annual workshop with Council Tax and Revenues Team to enable greater mutual understanding, joint working and staff efficiency. • Investigate the feasibility and implement a suitable multi-disciplinary virtual team or venue to tackle the issue of long-term empty homes in Dorset including representation from Council Tax, Conservation, Planning, Building Control and other relevant stake holders • Investigate and report on the feasibility of improving uptake of the private sector leasing scheme and Key4Me for the owners of empty homes • Contact and work with town and parish councils to make them aware of this strategy and how they may assist in its implementation, development and reporting.	• Share information, data and continue to build mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities and where possible reduce any duplication • Ensure a corporate approach to dealing with long term empty homes so that different services are aligned to this aim • Increase the uptake of leasing and renting schemes, including targeting more recent empty homes in high demand geographical areas, helping to reduce reliance on temporary accommodation. • Share information, data and continue to build mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities	Ongoing Quarterly November 2025 Report at annual review Report on pilot at annual review
8	Net Zero Promote energy efficient renovation practices to contribute to our net zero targets and reduce the environmental impact of bringing existing empty homes back into use.	Create guidance for those renovating empty homes which provides 'up to date', good quality information about works which contribute to creating more energy efficient homes, access to support and funding.	Contribute and work towards net zero targets	1 April 2026
9	Public Sector Equality Duty	Refer to EqIA Action Plan	Case officers are aware of the detail of the EQIA and its action plan. Identification of protected characteristics and application of	Within 6 months of the adoption of this strategy

	Implement the findings and action plan of the strategies Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA).		reasonable adjustments is embedded into the relevant documentation, processes and decision making	
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The performance indicators have been set with reference to the current and projected capacity of the service. Should this change, it would be necessary to review the strategy, its associated Action Plan and Performance Indicators.

Appendix 4 Enforcement powers

The general principles of how and when enforcement powers will be used is set out in the Housing Standards Enforcement Policy and Statement of Principles for determining Financial Penalties. Enforcement options include:

Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO's).

The Council may apply to the First Tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) to impose an [EDMO](#) on a house which has been empty for at least six months. If granted the order gives the Council the power to manage the house, but not take the full ownership. Final EDMO's last for a maximum period of seven years, after which another order may be applied for, or some alternative action taken.

During the lifetime of the EDMO, the Council is required to rent the property for residential purposes and may recover any costs incurred in improving and managing it through the rental income obtained. If there is any surplus income, then it must be passed on to the freehold owner.

The Council may work in partnership with a Registered Provider of Housing or other agencies to manage a property which has been subject to an EDMO.

Enforced Sale

The 'enforced sale' of a house is an option available to local authorities where a property has certain unpaid legal or financial charges secured on it. This typically includes costs associated with works carried out 'in default' of a notice. In these cases, the local authority exercises the power of sale conferred by the charge, to recover the money it is owed.

The most common statutory provisions enabling works in default with an associated property charge are detailed below:

- Section 4 Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949
Requiring land to be kept free of rats and mice
- Section 79 Building Act 1984
Requiring works to remedy ruinous and dilapidated buildings and neglected sites
- Section 80 Environmental Protection Act 1990
Requiring abatement of statutory nuisance
- Section 215 Town and Country Planning Act 1990
Requiring steps to be taken for the purpose of remedying the adverse effect on amenity caused by detrimental condition of land and buildings
- Sections 11 and 12 Housing Act 2006
Requiring the taking of action to deal with category 1 or 2 hazards in residential premises
- Council Tax Debts - requires an application to court and an order for sale

The Council can seek an order from HM Land Registry (Law of Property Act 1925) to force and complete the sale of the house on the open market or via auction to recoup its costs. The freehold owner is then entitled to the balance of the sale price.

As neglected long term empty properties can typically require the above formal action, combined with the fact that absent owners often fail to comply with works notices and pay the associated 'works in default' costs, then this process can be relevant to empty homes.

Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)

Various legal provisions provide local authorities with the power to apply to the Secretary of State to acquire land, houses or other properties by compulsion ([CPO](#)). CPO action can be considered in a range of circumstances including action on an empty home to ensure the provision of housing accommodation. CPO can also be used to enable an empty property to be renovated, improved, and brought back into beneficial use, which will remedy its adverse environmental, economic, and social impact on the surrounding area.

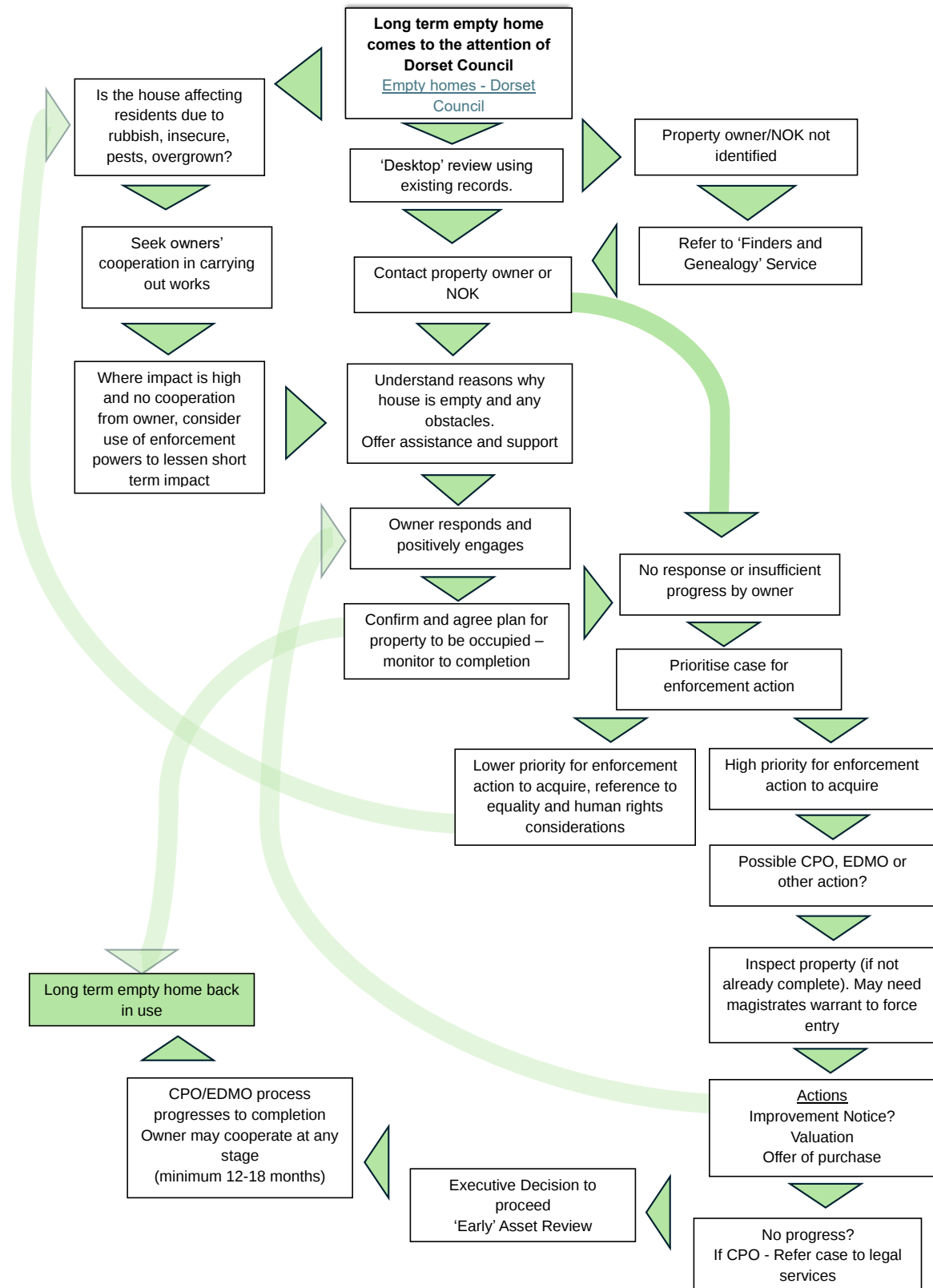
There are significant human rights and equality implications associated with the compulsory purchase of empty homes. Therefore, a CPO should only be considered where there is a compelling case in the public interest.

Other Enforcement Action

Other legislation can also be considered when dealing with issues arising from empty properties, including:

- [Local Government \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Act 1982 s29](#) - enables the Council to secure a property that is open to access
- [Buildings Act 1984 s77 and 78](#) - enables the Council to require an owner to make a property safe or allow emergency action to be taken to make it safe
- [Town and Country Planning Act 1990 s215](#) - enables the Council to take action to address a dis-amenity to the local community and unsightly external appearance
- [Housing Act 1985 s265](#) - enables the Council to demolish a property that cannot be satisfactorily repaired (i.e. derelict properties)
- [Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 Section 4](#) - Requiring land to be kept free of rats and mice
- [Environmental Protection Act 1990 Section 80](#) - Requiring abatement of statutory nuisance
- [Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014](#) – Community Protection Notice – action where a property is having a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality, and is unreasonable, and the behaviour is of a persistent or continuing nature.

Appendix 5 – Our Approach - Support, Assistance and Enforcement (Flow Chart)



Appendix 6 - Glossary of Terms

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

Action or inaction by a person(s) which causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to others.

Long term empty home

For the purposes of this strategy, a long-term empty home is a residential premises which has not been occupied for 2 years or more

Empty Homes Premium

This is an additional council tax charge on the owners of long-term empty properties that have been unoccupied and unfurnished for 1 year or more. The premium increases over time and is a 100% premium (double council tax) if the property has been empty for 1 to 5 years, 200% premium (triple council tax) from 5 to 10 years unoccupied and 300% premium (quadruple council tax) for 10 years or more unoccupied.

Holiday let

For the purposes of this strategy, a holiday let is any dwelling normally occupied for short periods of time on a commercial basis.

For the purposes of Council Tax, a holiday let is valued for Business Rates if:

- in the last 12 months the property has been available to let commercially for short periods of at least 140 nights; and
- the property will be available to let commercially for short periods of at least 140 nights in the next 12 months; and
- in the last 12 months the property has actually been let commercially as self-catering accommodation for short periods of 70 nights or more

‘Letters of administration’

If a person dies without a will, the next of kin can apply for the legal right to manage the estate. In these cases, the eligible application receives ‘letters of administration’ to prove they have a legal right to manage and disperse the estate of the deceased.

Probate

Probate is the process of obtaining the legal right to deal with someone’s property, money and possessions (their ‘estate’) when they die.

Second home

For the purposes of this strategy, a ‘second home’ is any furnished dwelling which is occupied from ‘time to time’, but nobody uses it as their only or main home.

There is no minimum period that a second home must be occupied. However, to be a second home and not an empty home, it must be at least occupied for some of the time.

For Council Tax purposes, a property is a ‘second home’ when it is substantially furnished but nobody uses the property as their only or main home.

Note - There is a distinction to be made between what could be termed a genuine ‘second home’, used periodically by its owners, which falls outside of this strategy and abandoned ‘second homes’, which are never occupied and are ‘in scope’ for the purposes of this strategy.

‘Sham second home’

For the purposes of this strategy, a long-term empty home can include a 'sham second home'. This is a dwelling, which the owner states is a 'second home' for council tax purposes, but it is not occupied for any period of time.

Appendix 7 - References and further information

1. [Local authority Council Taxbase in England: 2024 \(revised\) - GOV.UK](#)
2. [LGA: A practical approach for councils on dealing with empty homes](#)
3. [DEFRA: Second and Empty Homes: Statistical Digest of Rural England](#)
4. [Dorset Council Plan 2024 to 2029](#)
5. [Housing Strategy January 2024 to January 2029 - Dorset Council](#)
6. [Housing Standards Enforcement Policy and Statement of Principles for Determining Financial Penalties - October 2023 - Dorset Council](#)
7. [Action on Empty Homes](#)
8. [Empty Homes Network](#)

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Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Template

Before completing the EQIA please have a look at the [Dorset Council style guide](#) and also use the [accessibility checker](#) to make sure your document is easy for people of all abilities to read.

Some key tips

- avoid tables and charts, if possible please provide raw data
- avoid pictures and maps if possible.
- avoid using bold, italics or colour to highlight or stress a point
- when using numbering or bullet points avoid using capitals at the beginning unless the name of something
- date format is dd month yyyy (1 June 2021)
- use clear and simple language
- where you need to use technical terms, abbreviations or acronyms, explain what they mean the first time you use them
- if using hyperlinks, make sure the link text describes where the link goes rather than 'click here' Please note equality impact assessments are published on the Dorset Council [website](#)

Before completing this form, please refer to the [supporting guidance](#). The aim of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to consider the equality implications of your policy, strategy, project or service on different groups of people including employees of Dorset Council, residents and users of our services and to consider if there are ways to proactively advance equality.

Where further guidance is needed, please contact the Inclusion Champion or the [Diversity & Inclusion Officer](#).

1. Initial information

Name of the policy, project, strategy, project or service being assessed:

Empty Homes Strategy

2. Is this a (please delete those not required):

New Strategy

3. Is this (please delete those not required):

Both internal and external

4. Please provide a brief overview of its aims and objectives:

The new Empty Homes Strategy details how Dorset Council will work towards bringing more long-term empty, abandoned private homes back into beneficial use. During a time of high housing demand, empty homes represent a wasted housing resource. Also, long term empty homes are often a blight to our communities due to a lack of maintenance, break ins, squatting, rubbish, Anti-Social-Behaviour (ASB) and pests.

The strategy aims to use the Councils influence to help and encourage property owners to get their empty houses back into use quickly. In many cases our involvement is highly beneficial to the property owner, who is often overwhelmed by the responsibility of owning an empty property. Our advice, information and assistance is often the motivation required to bring the property into beneficial use, either by sale, renting or living in it themselves.

Where this action is not successful, in appropriate circumstances, the Council can use a variety of enforcement powers to firstly mitigate the impact of an empty home (prevent access, remove overgrowth etc), or as a total last resort, take over a properties management or ownership.

While this is a new strategy, the Council has a track record of successfully delivering this work since 2019. Leaders and operational officers already have a good appreciation of the need to meet our duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty, Equality Act, consider reasonable adjustments to our service delivery and consider the human rights balance between those that own property and the right to keep it empty, balanced against the rights of the community, materially affected by a long term empty home. The service can already draw on many practical examples of applying this approach to our decision making to arrive at safe and legal decisions.

5. Please provide the background to this proposal?

It is a strategic priority of the [Dorset Council Plan 2024 to 2029](#) to provide affordable and high-quality housing. It recognises the importance of increasing the availability of affordable homes to meet the needs of local people, improving the existing housing stock, and ensuring sustainable development. The aim being to improve residents' health, the economy and our local environment.

The vision of the [Housing Strategy January 2024 to January 2029 - Dorset Council](#) is to ensure our residents have access to affordable, suitable, secure homes where they can live well as part of sustainable and thriving communities.

Creating an Empty Homes Strategy is a corporate target of the Council – see (CPLAN (A)-03).

The development of an Empty Homes Strategy forms part of phase 1 of the [Home in on Housing](#) programme to deliver the Housing Strategy. The Home in On Housing project brief goes on to say that ‘Dorset has a strong record of positive work in relation to empty properties. We already offer support to property owners to bring empty homes back into use and will acquire homes, when necessary, affordable, or available. We will refresh our empty homes policies and identify opportunities to enhance our role. The Local Government Association’s Empty Homes Report identifies areas of best practice which should be applied to Dorset, to increase the numbers of empty properties being brought back in to use. This new Strategy will recognise and support our work to bring empty homes back into use. The complex nature of the work means this is a long-term activity but is beneficial to many and continues to be supported.’

Evidence gathering and engagement

6. What sources of data, evidence or research has been used for this assessment? (e.g national statistics, employee data):

The strategy was developed with assistance from Dorset Council’s housing services, adult social care, planning services, conservation, council tax, building control, legal services and the assets team.

We also used data from:

- research and analysis of the local and national housing context
- Local and national council tax data
- Council strategies and plans
- Information from internal and external engagement
- national policies and trends
- best practice research
- housing sector trends
- local housing data
- Government studies and research
- Internal staff workshops

7. What did this tell you?

Empty and abandoned homes are a waste of housing, locally, regionally and nationally. There are signs that the number of long-term empty homes is increasing year on year, just at a time when we need to make the best use of all our existing housing stock. Making sure that as many houses as possible are occupied and not abandoned, will help to reduce development requirements on new greenfield sites and ensure that our existing communities are not blighted.

Action by local councils across the country to deal with long term empty homes varies. There is no legal duty for councils to act, meaning that some do not prioritise this area of work.

Action on empty homes raises a lot of public support, evidenced by feedback from press releases, social media posts and public consultation.

8. Who have you engaged and consulted with as part of this assessment?

Prior to completing the strategy, consultation has taken place with the following stakeholders:

- housing services including housing enabling
 - adult social care
 - planning services
 - conservation
 - council tax
 - building control
 - legal services
 - assets team.
-
- Cllr 'Task and Finish' Group
 - Home in on Housing Officer Board
 - Home in on Housing Cllr Board

Consultees were provided with a draft copy of the strategy, a background presentation, given the opportunity for 'questions and answers' and to explore topic areas and finally invited to make comment. Feedback has been considered and the strategy amended where appropriate.

There is no statutory requirement for Councils to have an Empty Homes Strategy. As such there is no requirement for the strategy to be subject to public consultation. The need for an Empty Homes Strategy in part evolved from the [Housing Strategy public consultation \(October 2023\)](#) which informed the [Housing Strategy January 2024 to January 2029 - Dorset Council](#). The Councils Consultation and Engagement Team further advised that as the Housing Strategy was subject to this initial public consultation, it was not necessary to re-consult on the detail of this sub Strategy.

9. Is further information needed to help inform decision making?

No further information is required to inform the strategy.

Is an EQIA required?

Yes

Assessing the impact on different groups of people

For each of the protected characteristics groups below, please explain whether your proposal could have a positive, negative, unclear or no impact. Where an impact has been identified, please explain what it is and if unclear or negative please explain what mitigating actions will be taken.

- use the evidence you have gathered to inform your decision making.
- consider impacts on residents, service users and employees separately.
- if your strategy, policy, project or service contains options you may wish to consider providing an assessment for each option.
- see guidance for more information about the different [protected characteristics](#).

Key to impacts

Positive Impact	• the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.
Negative Impact	• protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against
Neutral Impact	• no change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	• not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Age	Negative/Positive	Older people are at higher likelihood of owning a long-term empty property. This is based on the current officer experience of administering casework. This can be due to changes in housing requirements as people age including for example no longer using a second home, inheriting additional property

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		and/or moving into care or with family. A lack of finances, knowledge and emotional attachment to houses can also play a role. One element of the strategy is to assist empty property owners to bring houses back into use. Owning an empty home is expensive, due to the loss of value of a house from disrepair and charges such as Council Tax Premiums, which can lead to quadruple bills. Helping owners to deal with such properties can significantly assist them to dispose of financial liabilities reducing their financial burdens.
Disability	Negative/Positive	Disabled residents are at higher likelihood of owning an empty home. This is based on the current officer experience of administering casework. This can be due to changes in housing requirements due to disability and care needs. Examples can include moving into care or with family. A lack of finances, knowledge and emotional attachment to houses can also play a role. Some owners of long-term empty homes may lack the mental capacity to make complex legal and financial decisions One element of the strategy is to assist empty property owners to bring houses back into use. Owning an empty home is expensive, due to the loss of value of a house due to disrepair and charges such as Council Tax Premiums, which

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		can lead to quadruple bills. Helping owners to deal with such properties can significantly assist them to dispose of financial liabilities reducing their financial burdens. Our involvement may also highlight to the owner the availability of financial assistance such as Disabled Facilities Grants – enabling the owner to return safely to a home they originally thought as of unsuitable.
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Neutral	The strategy does not specifically impact this protected characteristic. There is some limited evidence that gender reassignment and gender identify can lead to differences in known pronouns/names when compared to historical legal documents such as property deeds and ownership which may not have been amended. While this does not impact our initial engagement and contact with such persons which can reflect their preferred names/pronouns, it may affect the naming/pronouns used on legal notices which will need to follow the detail of foundation legal documents such as the land registry entry
Marriage or civil partnership	Neutral	The strategy does not specifically impact this protected characteristic
Pregnancy and maternity	Neutral	The strategy does not specifically impact this protected characteristic
Race and Ethnicity	Neutral	The strategy does not specifically impact this protected characteristic

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Religion and belief	Neutral	The strategy does not specifically impact this protected characteristic
Sex (consider men and women)	Neutral	The strategy does not specifically impact this protected characteristic
Sexual orientation	Neutral	The strategy does not specifically impact this protected characteristic
People with caring responsibilities	Negative	Those with caring responsibilities can be at high risk of owning an empty property. In some cases, owners may have to leave their main residence empty, to care for others at another location.
Rural isolation	Positive	Empty, abandoned homes in our rural towns and villages can increase the sense of rural isolation. They are also at high risk of break in, vandalism and squatting. By lessening the impact of empty homes by using powers to secure them, or remove excessive overgrowth, this strategy can positively contribute to reducing rural isolation. By bringing properties back into beneficial use, some of which will be in a rural setting, this strategy can positively contribute to reducing rural isolation.
Socio-economic deprivation	Positive	Lower income residents, who are asset rich and cash poor, can be at higher risk of owning long term empty property. A lack of available funds can make it difficult to progress with the costs of dealing with an empty home. Helping those individuals to deal with an empty property can help to release capital.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		Owning an empty home can be very expensive for the owner. They can accumulate significant debt associated with repair costs, loss of value of the house, and council tax debt (empty homes can attract council tax premiums of up to 300% - quadruple council tax). Helping owners to deal with their empty homes can assist them in reducing or eliminating these liabilities, which is critical during a time of high and increasing living costs.
Single parents	Neutral	The strategy does not specifically impact this protected characteristic
Armed forces communities	Negative	Armed forces communities are at high likelihood of owning long term empty properties. Posting to other parts of the UK and world for prolonged periods can mean that they leave their main residence empty for long periods.

Please provide a summary of the impacts:

There is the potential for property owners who possess the following protected characteristics to be disadvantaged or discriminated against as part of council action associated with the Empty Homes Strategy.

- Age
- Disability
- People with caring responsibilities
- Socio-economic deprivation
- Armed forces communities

This can be due to changes in housing requirements, sometimes directly linked to those protected characteristics, including:

- no longer using a second home,
- inheriting additional property
- moving into care or with family
- moving to care for others

- a lack of finances, knowledge and emotional attachment to houses
- employment responsibilities
- mental capacity and ability to make complex financial and legal decisions

Action Plan

Summarise any actions required as a result of this EqIA.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
Staff are not fully aware of equality issues when carrying out empty homes work	Staff engaged in this work to attend specific refresher training on the content of this assessment and action plan.	Housing Standards Service Manager/ Team Leader East	Within 3 months of the strategy being adopted
Protected characteristics of empty homeowners are not identified at an early enough stage	Review all letters and forms to ensure that information about protected characteristics are identified at an early stage of the process. Through officer training ensure that the identification of protected characteristics and reasonable adjustments are a routine part of the empty homes response. All data is processed in accordance with our Housing standards and environmental health privacy notice - Dorset Council	Housing Standards Service Manager/ Team Leader East	Within 6 months of the strategy being adopted
Appropriate reasonable adjustments to service delivery are not properly identified and implemented	Amend letters and forms to ensure that information about any adjustments a property owner may need are identified, and any reasonable adjustments implemented at an early stage of the process. Review how we ask property owners how they want to be kept updated, this may include for example only communicating in person or always putting information in writing in an appropriate format.	Housing Standards Service Manager/ Team Leader East	Within 6 months of the strategy being adopted

Property owners do not engage with us following all contact and we are not aware of their protected characteristics. Alternatively, contact is received, and the homeowner does not tell us about their protected characteristics	All property owners to be given standard information about local support and advocacy services at an early stage (including friends and family), including advice about access to financial and legal advice. If intelligence is gathered that a property owner <i>may</i> have a protected characteristic, contact to be made with Social Care to find out if the person is known to them (both within and outside of Dorset). Note - Although Data Protection allows the release of this information where there is a legal basis, this type of information/data sharing has proved problematic in the past. All reasonable efforts made to engage with property owners in person, including where appropriate home visits, including visits outside of the Dorset area. Review the availability and access eligibility of local advice and support services able to assist or advocate for property owners with protected characteristics.	Housing Standards Service Manager/ Team Leader East	Within 3 months of the strategy being adopted Within 6 months of this strategy being adopted
Cases are progressed inappropriately without adequate regard to equality issues, protected characteristics and reasonable adjustments, especially with regard to enforcement action	Where enforcement action is being considered, and a property owner <i>may</i> have a protected characteristic, the case shall be subject to a specific EQIA, taking all relevant factors into account including contact with key persons, professionals, family, advocates, social care etc who may be involved with that person/property.	Housing Standards Service Manager/ Team Leader East	Within 3 months of the strategy being adopted

	Where a property owner has a protected characteristic then enforcement action would only be considered where all other informal attempts to resolve the matter has been exhausted and the property is having a demonstrable impact or nuisance on the surrounding area and residents.		
Property owners with Protected Characteristics associated with gender reassignment and gender identity are addressed inappropriately in legal and other documents	All informal documentation to use property owners preferred names/pronouns. For any legal notices, should the name/pronoun of a property owner differ from that detailed on any primary document (such as the land registry), property owners to be given the opportunity to take steps to amend the original legal documentation. This will then enable legal documents to be issued in the property owners preferred and current legal format. Note – we maybe legally required to serve some notices on the named individual as it appears on the land registry.	Housing Standards Service Manager/ Team Leader East	Within 3 months of the strategy being adopted
Inappropriate enforcement and other action is taken against - Armed forces communities - People with caring responsibilities who own empty properties	Staff engaged in this work to be trained in this content of this assessment. Absence from a main home for the armed forces communities and people with caring responsibilities is often for periods of less than a few years and in those cases, any action would be postponed as a reasonable response. Enforcement action would only be considered where all other informal attempts to resolve the matter has been exhausted and the property is having a demonstrable	Housing Standards Service Manager/ Team Leader East	Within 3 months of this strategy being adopted

	impact or nuisance on the surrounding area and residents.		
A resident has left a house as it is no longer suitable for them, due to a disability and associated access need	Staff engaged in this work to be trained in this content of this assessment. Staff to be aware that they can signpost to appropriate services including adult and children social care, Dorset Accessible Homes Service (DAHS), for possible adaptation advice and financial assistance (Disabled Facilities Grant).	Housing Standards Service Manager/ Team Leader East	Within 3 months of the strategy being adopted.

Sign Off

Officer completing this EqIA: Steve March

Officers involved in completing the EqIA: Chris Monteith, Murray Bodek, Louise Capaldi-Tallon, Gary Messenger

Date of completion: 16.7.25

Version Number: 3

EqIA review date: 30.7.26

Equality Lead Sign Off: James Palfreman-Kay 30.7.25

Next Steps:

- the EqIA will be reviewed by Communications and Engagement and if in agreement, your EqIA will be signed off.
- if not, we will get in touch to chat further about the EqIA, to get a better understanding.
- EqIA authors are responsible to ensuring any actions in the action plan are implemented.

Please send to [Diversity and Inclusion Officer](#)

People and Health Overview Committee

15 September 2025

Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028

For Recommendation to Cabinet

Cabinet Member:

Cllr G Taylor, Health and Housing

Local Councillor(s): All

Senior Leadership Team:

J Price, Executive Director of People - Adults

Report author and job title: Ian Grant, Programme Coordinator for Community Safety, Adults and Housing

Email: ian.grant@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Report status: Public

Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)

1. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 was passed into law on the 01 April 2021.
- 1.1 Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a duty on Tier One local authorities, such as Dorset Council, to assess the need for support and prepare strategies for its provision to victims and their children [who need to reside] in relevant accommodation. The Act places a duty on each Tier One local authority in England to:
 - appoint a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board (LPB) which it must consult as it performs functions (below). In Dorset, the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) has adopted the role and functions of the LPB.
 - assess, or make arrangements for the assessment of, the need for domestic abuse support in their area for all victims (and their children) who reside in relevant safe accommodation, including those who come from outside of their area.
 - prepare and publish a strategy for the provision of such support to cover their area having regard to the need's assessment.
 - give effect to the strategy (through commissioning / de-commissioning decisions)
 - monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.
 - report back annually to central government.

- 1.2 In January 2022, Dorset Council in conjunction with the Dorset Community Safety Partnership (CSP) released its first Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy.
- 1.3 Whilst the primary focus responded to statutory guidance in relation to support for people and their families in safe accommodation, the strategy aimed to go further, recognising the whole system and aligning to partners' existing ambitions and activity in tackling domestic abuse.
- 1.4 Since the first strategy was released good progress has been made in delivering on the recommendations. This includes the commissioning of additional services for people and their families within safe accommodation, strengthening pathways, undertaking further research and evidence, and raising awareness of the services available to support people affected by domestic abuse.
- 1.5 Under the Act, the council is required to update their strategies, based on an updated needs assessment, every three years.
- 1.6 This revised strategy for 2025-2028 aims to continue the work of the Council and the CSP, setting out the areas it will focus on for the next three years.
- 1.7 The updated strategy has been informed by years of evidence and research, combined with an updated needs assessment.
- 1.8 Whilst this latest strategy adopts a similar approach to the outgoing strategy, noticeably adopting a whole systems approach, a significant driver for the new strategy is the focus on improving accessibility. This is to make sure partners' focus is on actions that help set up effective systems and support services that meet the needs of everyone in the community.
- 1.9 The Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028 has been endorsed by the Community Safety Partnership and now requires formal approval by the Council.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That the committee comment on, endorse, and recommend adoption of the Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-28 to Cabinet.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

- 3.1 To ensure the Council meets its statutory duty under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 relating to preparing and publishing a domestic abuse strategy.

4. The report

4.1 Details covered under the executive summary and appended strategy.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 None.

6. Legal considerations

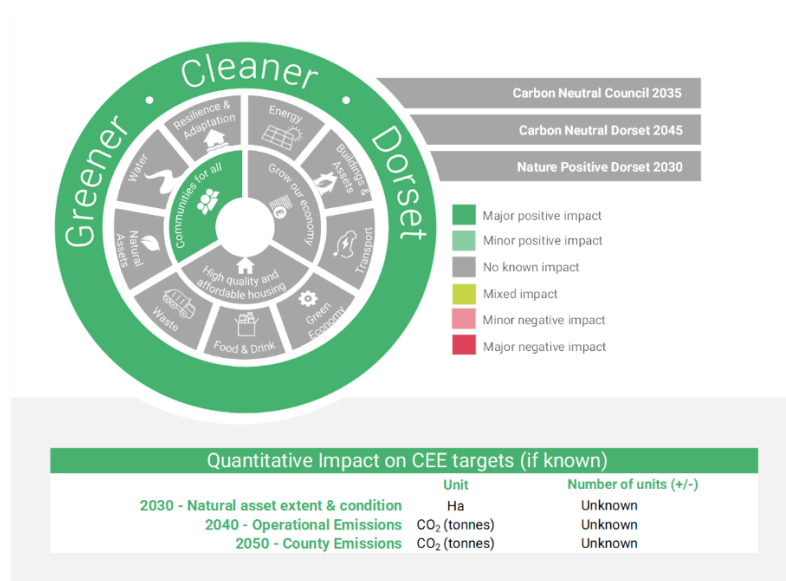
6.1 The Council must have a strategy for supporting people and their families affected by domestic abuse, in safe accommodation.

7. Financial implications

7.1 The Council receives new burdens funding to deliver duties under the Domestic Abuse Act. From 2025/26, this funding has been incorporated into the Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS).

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1 None.



9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 Domestic abuse has a significant impact on people's physical and mental health.

9.2 The Council's work to tackle domestic abuse, including responding to requirements in the Domestic Abuse Act, helps strengthen the local response, providing people and their families with the right support.

10. **Other implications**

- 10.1 The Council's response to meeting its new duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 forms part of its wider work to tackle crime and ensure Dorset's communities are safe.

11. **Risk implications**

- 11.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

12. **Equalities**

- 12.1 The appended EQIA (Equality Impact Assessment) was undertaken as part of the development of the strategy.

13. **Appendices**

- 13.1 Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028 Final Draft
13.2 Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy EQIA.

14. **Background papers**

- 14.1 None.

15. **Report sign-off**

- 15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy

2025 - 2028



This Strategy has been endorsed by the Dorset
Community Safety Partnership.



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Position Statement

Our Vision

For many years the Dorset Community Safety Partnership (CSP) has been working to tackle issues related to domestic abuse. The CSP believes domestic abuse, in all forms, is completely unacceptable and not to be tolerated. It is committed to tackling it by preventing abuse from happening, supporting victims and survivors, and prosecuting offenders.

Our Priorities

prevention: we want to stop domestic abuse from happening altogether. To do that we will focus on actions and initiatives that are preventative so that fewer people become victims.

victims/survivors: victims and survivors of domestic abuse, whoever they are, will have access to services that keep them safe and prevent further harm.

offenders: offenders will be held to account for their action.

Cutting across all the priorities is '**accessibility**' ensuring that the system and the services that operate within it, are accessible to everyone who needs them.



What is Domestic Abuse?

In April 2021, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 was passed into law. The Act introduced, for the first time, a [new legal definition for domestic abuse](#).

As described by SafeLives...

'Domestic abuse (sometimes referred to as 'domestic violence' or 'intimate partner violence') can happen to anyone, anywhere, at any time in a relationship.

Domestic abuse isn't always physical. Any type of threatening, controlling or coercive behaviour is abuse – whether it's physical, psychological, sexual, economic or emotional.

Domestic abuse can affect anyone, from any background and of any age. It occurs in a range of relationships, including with an intimate partner, a child, a sibling, an ex-partner, a casual partner or a family member. And it can happen at any point in a relationship, whether you live with the person or not.

There is no shame and no one should live in fear of someone else. You are not alone.

Types of domestic abuse

Domestic abuse takes many forms and can involve a range of behaviour, such as:

- *coercive or controlling behaviour*
- *physical abuse*
- *sexual abuse*
- *economic and financial abuse*
- *psychological and emotional abuse*
- *'honour'-based abuse and forced marriage*
- *stalking and harassment*
- *online and digital abuse*

Coercive and controlling behaviour

Domestic abuse often includes coercive or controlling behaviour. This can happen in many ways and involves things like controlling what someone can do, isolating them from friends and family, constant criticism, threats of suicide or harm, damage to property and abuse of pets.

Coercive control isn't always obvious. And it doesn't necessarily stop when a relationship ends.



Physical and sexual abuse

Domestic abuse may involve physical violence, injury and harm – or the threat of physical harm.

Victims may also experience sexual harassment, assault or rape. They may be coerced or forced into sexual acts. They may be recorded in sexual activity without permission, and this may be shared without consent. They may be prevented from accessing birth control or sexual health services.

Physical and/or sexual abuse may occur once or part of a wider pattern of abuse, and can cause long-term harm to both physical and mental health.

Economic and financial abuse

Economic abuse is a form of coercive control, where money is used as a way to control or cause harm to someone. It includes financial abuse, preventing someone from accessing, using or maintaining money. This might mean limiting your opportunity to work or claim benefits, refusing access to a bank account, dictating how money is spent, stealing money or running up debts. Economic abuse also involves controlling other resources such as housing, food and employment.

Psychological and emotional abuse

Psychological abuse involves the regular and deliberate use of words and non-physical actions to manipulate, hurt, weaken or frighten a person and to distort, confuse or influence their thoughts and actions. Psychological abuse is as harmful as physical abuse, although the effects aren't always visible to others. Nearly all cases of domestic abuse involve some form of psychological or emotional abuse, and it can happen in a relationship where there is no physical violence.

'Honour'-based abuse and forced marriage

'Honour'-based abuse, or 'honour'-based violence (HBV), is used to describe a range of abuse by family, relatives or community members to defend their perceived 'honour' – though there is never any honour in or justification for abuse. Women and girls are particularly at risk of HBV, though men can also be victims. It can take many forms, including 'honour' killings, forced marriage, rape and sexual violence, physical abuse, kidnapping, imprisonment, emotional abuse and coercive control.



Stalking and harassment

Stalking and harassment is any unwanted and persistent behaviour. It is a common feature of domestic abuse, though it also happens in isolation. It includes behaviour such as constant communication, uninvited visits, frequent and excessive contact, loitering and threats to harm and kill. Stalking and harassment can take place in person or online, or a combination of both.

Online and digital abuse

Online and digital abuse, or 'tech abuse', happens when technology is misused to monitor, control, stalk, harass or impersonate a victim or survivor. It may involve controlling social media use or devices, monitoring locations or tracking someone, publishing content encouraging harm, threatening to share confidential, humiliating or embarrassing information online and sending malicious messages.¹

Children are also covered under the new definition of domestic abuse. This includes where a child see's, hears, witnesses or is affected by the abuse.

Domestic abuse is a social problem that cuts across all social, geographic, and cultural groups and has a potentially devastating effect on those impacted by it. This in turn has serious human and financial implications for society as a whole.

¹ [What is domestic abuse? - SafeLives](#)



Domestic Abuse Act 2021

In April 2021, the government passed the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The measures in the Act aim to:

- **promote awareness:** to put abuse at the top of everyone's agenda, including by introducing a statutory definition of domestic abuse
- **protect and support victims,** including by introducing new Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders
- **transform the justice response,** including through helping victims to give their best evidence in the criminal courts via video evidence, screens and other special measures, and ensuring that victims of abuse do not suffer further trauma in family court proceedings by being cross-examined by their abuser
- **improve performance:** the new Domestic Abuse Commissioner will help drive consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse across all local areas and agencies

Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a duty on Tier One local authorities, such as Dorset Council, to assess the need for support and prepare strategies for its provision to victims and their children [who need to reside] in relevant accommodation. The Act places a duty on each Tier One local authority in England to:

- Appoint a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board (LPB) which it must consult as it performs functions (below). In Dorset, the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) has adopted the role and functions of the LPB.
- Assess, or make arrangements for the assessment of, the need for domestic abuse support in their area for all victims (and their children) who reside in relevant safe accommodation, including those who come from outside of their area.
- Prepare and publish a strategy for the provision of such support to cover their area having regard to the need's assessment.
- Give effect to the strategy (through commissioning / de-commissioning decisions)
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.
- Report back annually to central government.

In January 2022, Dorset Council, in conjunction with the Dorset Community Safety Partnership (CSP) released its first Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy. This revised strategy for 2025-2028 aims to continue the work of the Council and the CSP, setting out the areas it will focus on for the next three years.



Looking Back

Whilst this strategy sets out partners ambitions for the future, it's important to reflect back at the progress made during 2021-2024. This provides partners the opportunity to reflect on areas that have worked well, those that proved particularly challenging, and those that require further work.

Progress against the Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-2024

The 2021-2024 strategy was created following a thorough assessment of local need. The primary focus of this work was to assess the level of need required to support to victims of domestic abuse, including children, in domestic abuse safe accommodation. However, partners of the Dorset CSP recognised that accommodation-based support was just one part of a much wider response needed to tackle domestic abuse, and that it was necessary to go further and examine the wider needs and issues associated with domestic abuse. Given that, the needs assessment looked at the wider community-based response to domestic abuse, aligning to partners approach to looking at the system as a whole. This broader perspective was incorporated into the resultant strategy.

The recommendations which emerged from the 2021-2024 needs assessment were:

- the Local Partnership Board (LPB) should explore strengthening the sanctuary / target hardening offer, including coordination.
- the LPB should explore giving security to the provision to support children and young people in accommodation-based settings.
- the LPB should explore national innovation and good practice to help inform the local housing offer, including prevention, male provision, and housing options for perpetrators.
- any future needs assessment should consider demand, needs and provision across other counties in the UK.
- commissioners should work together to design services / systems and seek joint commissioning opportunities.
- the LPB should consider the impact of COVID-19.
- the LPB should work to balance the system between prevention, perpetrator offer and reactive services.
- the LPB should adopt an approach that enables people experiencing / who have experienced domestic abuse, their families, and the community to shape provision and the local response.



To date partners have made good progress in delivering against the recommendations. This includes bolstering support for victims (and their children) in safe accommodation, as well as working together on commissioning activities, and carrying out original research into local domestic abuse.

As the strategy comes to an end it's important for partners to reflect on the progress made and to identify lessons that can be taken forward into future versions of the strategy. Key headlines on activity taken from the past three years include:

- bolstered provision for victims of domestic abuse (and their children) in safe accommodation via the Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (IDAS). This has involved:
 - target hardening
 - support for children in safe accommodation, i.e., refuge and properties that have benefited from target hardening
 - specialist domestic abuse housing advice
- investments made in the Dorset Council Housing Service to provide dedicated domestic abuse housing advice.
- strengthening the pathways between IDAS and the Dorset Council Housing Service.
- creating target hardening guidance.
- undertaking extensive research (i.e. annual local profiles) which has helped inform both our local approach and the recommissioning of domestic abuse services.
- worked with regional councils to map demand on safe accommodation, as well as using national findings to support the recommissioning of local services.
- using learning from the COVID-19 pandemic to adapt provision to meet the needs of the local community and to inform future provision.
- engaging with victims/survivors, communities, and providers of domestic abuse, through the Dorset Domestic Abuse Forum, as well as through one off commissioned pieces of work (i.e. SafeLives Public Health Approach review), findings from which have helped shape our local response and recommissioning of local services.
- established a domestic abuse commissioning working group, which has explored and agreed options to align commissioning activity and worked together on system design, with a view to enabling a seamless pathway between services and enabling a balanced system.



- carried out regular awareness raising sessions.
- engaged with regional and national forums to help shape policy, including the office of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner (DAC).

While much of these recommendations were completed, some of the work will continue as core business.

One area highlighted where further work is required is regarding researching best practice for housing options, particularly for those people who find it difficult to access shared refuge provision and for the perpetrators of domestic abuse.



Informing the Strategy

As with the earlier work, this current strategy is supported by an updated Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment. This latest edition of the assessment provides a current overview of the domestic abuse in Dorset. It utilises data provided by several local agencies that are involved in tackling domestic abuse to compile a base of evidence. This includes an analysis of the changing volume in reported abuse, demographic profiles of both victims and perpetrators, and the identification of relative underreporting by certain groups. In addition, it includes a section in which the lived experience of local victims is detailed through a series of quotations.

The Needs Assessment aims to guide the focus of this accompanying Domestic Abuse Strategy, also produced by the Dorset Community Safety Partnership, which will steer the local delivery of domestic abuse services for the three-year period 2025-28.

The principal findings from this needs assessment are listed here:

- reports to the Police regarding domestic abuse in Dorset have increased by 24% in the past four years.
- reports of domestic abuse to both the Police and Paragon show a slight seasonal variation, with more being received during the summer months than in the winter.
- the volume of domestic abuse related adult safeguarding referrals has increased over recent months
- the proportion of all instances where local housing Prevention and Relief Duties were served in response to cases of domestic abuse have increased over the past four years.
- 75% of all domestic abuse related crimes recorded by Dorset Police were classified as violence against the person offence
- two thirds of all violence against the person domestic abuse related offences were classed as assaults...
- ...and a further 15% were classed as stalking offences.
- data from Adult Safeguarding suggests that psychological domestic abuse is more prevalent than inferred from the records held by the Police.
- in Dorset the volume of domestic abuse cases classed as 'high risk' is increasing.
- not all incidences of domestic abuse reported to the local Police involved victims who were Dorset residents. Between 2020 and 2023, 15% of reported domestic abuse had victims who were out of county residents.



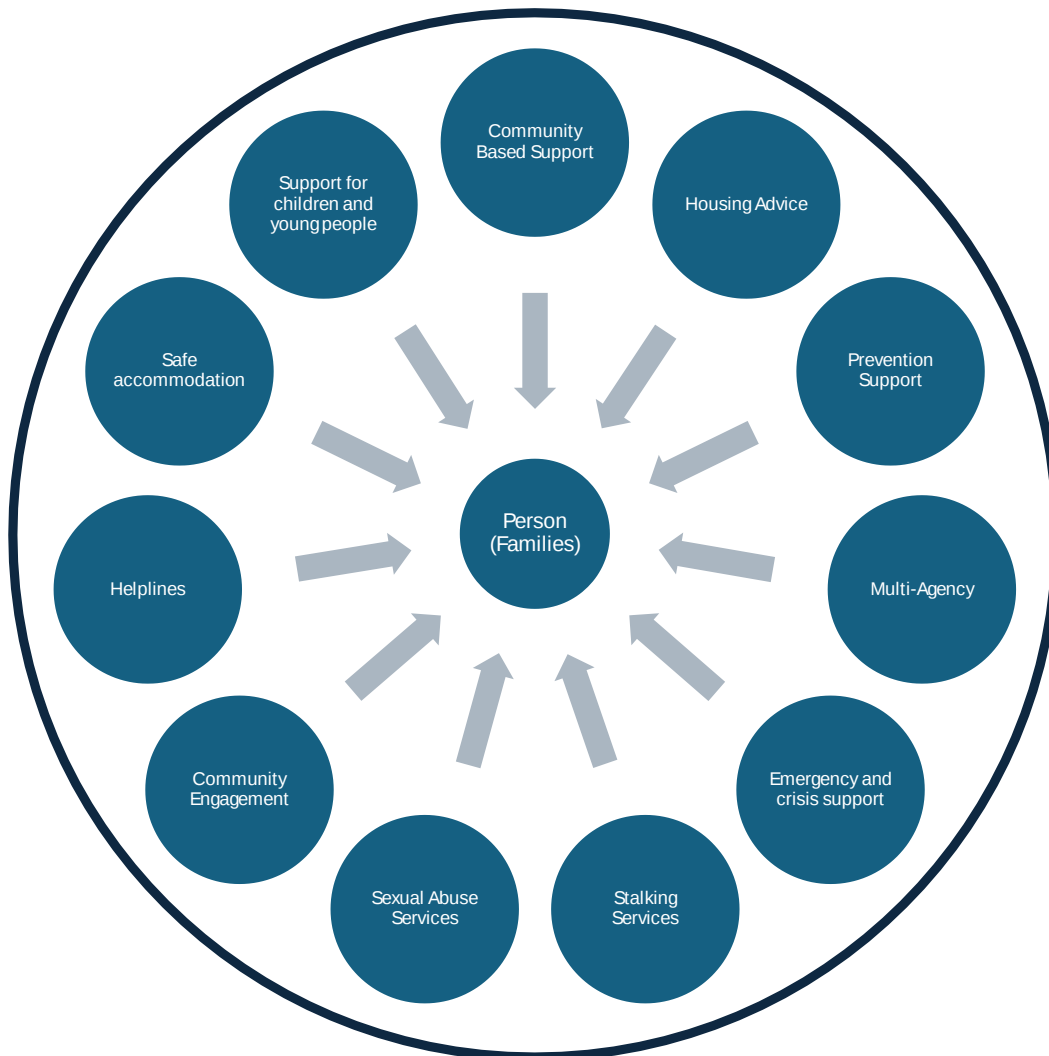
- in Dorset there is a significant underreporting of domestic abuse to the Police among younger males (aged 16 to 25), younger females (aged 16 to 20), and older women (aged over 54).
- there is also significant underreporting of domestic abuse to Paragon, especially from younger and older females, and from male victims (all ages).
- in comparison to those living in urban areas, underreporting is more prevalent among female victims living in rural parts of Dorset.
- victims, of all genders, who live in Dorset's most deprived areas are more likely to contact the Police to report their domestic abuse rather than Paragon. Victims from wealthier areas are more likely to contact Paragon than they are to contact the Police.
- over half (54%) of the domestic abuse cases dealt with by Paragon between 2020 and 2023 came from victims who lived in households with at least one cohabiting dependant.
- a significant minority (27%) of all domestic abuse related reports to Dorset Police involved perpetrators who lived outside of Dorset.
- only two-thirds (67%) of cases reported to Dorset Police involved a Dorset County resident victim and a Dorset County resident suspect.
- a clear majority (73%) of domestic abuse related incidents reported to Dorset Police involved a male perpetrator.
- the majority (53%) of domestic abuse cases recorded by the Police featured suspects – of all genders – that were aged between twenty-five and forty-four.
- just under half (47%) of all known domestic abuse suspects were 'repeat' perpetrators.
- approximately half of all domestic abuse events reported to the Police – and almost two-thirds of those reported to Paragon - involved abuse between former partners. 20% of Police cases, and 10% of Paragon cases, involved intra-familial, often intergenerational, abuse.
- a sizeable proportion of domestic abuse events recorded by the Police involved victims and perpetrators of a similar age, often between twenty and forty years old.



Current Offer

There are a range of support options for people (and families) affected by domestic abuse in Dorset. These range from directly commissioned services, services provided by statutory partners, and services provided through the voluntary and community sector.

Whole System



Community Based Support

Specialist domestic abuse provision that supports people and their families within the community to be safe, build resilience and gain independence.

Housing Advice

Dedicated and specialist domestic abuse housing support to assist people and their families navigate the housing system and to support with housing advice and options. This is provided across commissioned and statutory services.

Prevention Support

A range of interventions to support survivors of domestic abuse, through recovery and therapeutic programs, counselling, and domestic abuse perpetrator programs.

Multi-Agency

High Risk Domestic Abuse (HRDA) multi agency process for high-risk domestic abuse. HRDA is Dorset's version of MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference)

Emergency and Crisis Support

Statutory responses including Police and Safeguarding response. This also includes dedicated specialist Domestic Abuse Advisors (DAAs) who support high risk cases of domestic abuse. DAAs are Dorset's version of Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs)

Stalking Services

Provision to support people who are experiencing stalking through dedicated stalking workers.

Sexual Abuse Services

Provision to support people who have experienced sexual abuse through Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVA), Sexual Abuse Referral Centre, counselling and other therapeutic support.

Community Engagement

Programs and initiatives to raise awareness of domestic abuse within the community. This includes building a network of champions against domestic abuse.

Helplines

Providing help and advice to people experiencing domestic abuse and acting as routes into specialist domestic abuse services for ongoing support.



Safe Accommodation

A range of safe accommodation options for people and their families affected by domestic abuse. This includes refuge, move on accommodation, and supporting people to remain living at home safely, through target hardening measures.

Support for Children and Young People

Supporting children and young people in the community and in safe accommodation through dedicated children and young people workers. Safeguarding Families Together (SFT) offering wraparound support to children and families where there is domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental health, working alongside Children Social Care.

This list is not exhaustive. More details of the services and provision available to people affected by domestic abuse can be found at: [Domestic abuse - Dorset Council](#)



Looking Forward

In response to the issues identified in the needs assessment, and to provide continuity from the last strategy, activity will be channeled through the following three priorities.

Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3
Prevention	Victims/Survivors	Offenders
Prevention activities focus on the development of and continuation of perpetrator programs; ensuring behaviour changing programs are effective; making sure practitioners are skilled in understand domestic abuse issues; early education and intervention (including children and young people); preventing ongoing abuse and/or providing people with the skills to recognise abuse; and working with communities to challenge tolerance of domestic abuse.	The main focus is on continuing to develop the current service offer, ensuring people experiencing/who have experienced domestic abuse, their families, and the community help inform the design and commissioning of services.	Dorset Police already takes a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse. This will be supported through public communications campaigns including highlighting key prosecutions.

Golden Thread – Accessibility

There are many factors that can make it harder for people and specific communities to access services. For example, due to someone living in a rural community who might find it harder accessing services, or because of someone's social status, or due to issues specifically associated with a protected characteristic. In response to this, it is essential that accessibility is considered throughout the local response, ensuring that there is a system that is fit for everyone, and accessible to all.

Recommendations and Activity

In direct response to the following recommendations, this strategy will ensure partners activity is focused on:



Recommendations <i>We Should</i>	Activity <i>We Will</i>
Consider the local offer in the context of the predicted increase in demand over the next three years, ensuring it remains accessible and is able to continue to deliver good outcomes to the people who need them.	Seek innovative ways of managing demand safely and sustainably.
Consider ways of improving accessibility in the system so it is available to everyone who needs it. For example, rural communities, younger people, older people, LGBT+, and men.	Develop solutions that enable people who find it harder to access services to find the right support at the right time.
Consider developing the local safe accommodation offer to ensure that the needs of everyone who needs it are met.	Use local learning, national innovation and best practice, to continue to develop the local safe accommodation offer.
Understand the drivers that reduce and stop reoffending, thereby cutting the number of repeat incidents of domestic abuse.	Work with the Police to develop ways to tackle and disrupt repeat offending.
Commissioners should continue to work together to design services / system and seek joint commissioning opportunities.	Review the Dorset (Pan Dorset) Domestic Abuse Commissioning Charter '<i>enabling a whole systems approach to domestic abuse</i>'. Partners will also work with commissioners and partners from outside of Dorset.



Partners should balance the system between prevention, perpetrator offer and reactive services.	Review the Dorset (Pan Dorset) Domestic Abuse Commissioning Charter ' <i>enabling a whole systems approach to domestic abuse</i> '. Use learning from the needs assessment to inform the local offer.
Continue to create approaches that enable people experiencing / who have experienced domestic abuse, their families, and the community to shape provision and the local response.	Further develop our approach to enabling those with lived experience, including children and young people, help shape the local response.
Continue to identify ways of supporting the voluntary and community sector.	Further develop and strengthen our approach to supporting the voluntary and community sector through the Dorset Domestic Abuse Forum.
Recognise the links between stalking, sexual abuse and domestic abuse, using the evidence base to inform services.	Develop ways to strengthen the pathways between stalking, sexual abuse and domestic abuse.

Detailed actions setting out partners work in response to the following recommendations and activity will be captured in delivery plans.

This latest strategy builds on the previous strategy and presents an important opportunity to ensure partners continue to develop a system that not only prevents abuse from happening but also ensures that anyone affected by domestic abuse has access to support, regardless of where they are on their journey.



Monitoring and Evaluation

To support partners in measuring success and to gauge whether this strategy is having its intended impact, a range of performance measures have been created through the Dorset Community Safety Partnerships (CSP) Community Safety Plan.

For the purpose of this strategy, these measures will be used to ensure there is consistency in monitoring performance across the Dorset CSP, and which can be tracked through the quarterly CSP performance updates.

A summary of the measures include:

- a reduction in the annual proportion of all domestic abuse events which have identifiable 'repeat victims'
- a reduction in the number of domestic abuse related stalking crimes reported annually
- a reduction in the percentage of domestic abuse events committed annually by 'repeat' perpetrators

In addition, further pieces of research and performance analysis will be undertaken to either build our understanding of domestic abuse in Dorset, or to measure impact of the action partners have taken, for example:

- regular evaluation and reflection on the effectiveness of our work related to domestic abuse, including data analysis and the voice of those with lived experience.
- modifying our strategies and approaches based on evaluation results, emerging trends and community needs to ensure ongoing effectiveness.

Finally, Dorset Council is required under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to report back to Government (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) annually on safe accommodation.

Commissioning

In 2021/22 partners came together to create the Dorset (Pan Dorset) Domestic Abuse Commissioning Charter 'Enabling a whole systems approach to domestic abuse'. The charter will be updated alongside this new strategy to reflect current and future ambitions to commissioning domestic abuse services, and to consider any changes and requirements coming from new legislation, for example, Victims and Prisoners Act 2024.



Communication

The Dorset CSP will continue its work to raise awareness of domestic abuse and the services available to people who are affected by it. This will encompass a variety of methods to ensure material is made accessible to everyone in the community. Partners will continue to support national initiatives, using these as a vehicle to raise awareness on this important issue.

Governance

This Strategy has been created and will be overseen by the Dorset Community Safety Partnership (CSP). The CSP is held to account by Dorset Council's People and Health Scrutiny Committee (Designated Crime and Disorder Committee).

The membership of the CSP includes:

- Dorset Council
- Dorset Police
- NHS Dorset
- Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Authority
- Probation Service
- Police and Crime Commissioner for Dorset (or their office)
- Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service
- Dorset Domestic Abuse Forum

By adopting the role and functions of the Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, the Dorset CSP is well placed to ensure the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028 aligns to other local strategies, including housing, community safety and safeguarding.

A full review of the strategy will take place every three years, with an annual refresh through the Dorset CSP Community Safety Plan.

Author

Ian Grant, Programme Coordinator, Community Safety, Adults & Housing, Dorset Council

ian.grant@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

01305 228516



Accessing Help

To access information on the support services available in Dorset, please visit: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/your-community/community-safety/domestic-abuse>

-Ends-





Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Template

Before completing the EQIA please have a look at the [Dorset Council style guide](#) and also use the [accessibility checker](#) to make sure your document is easy for people of all abilities to read.

Some key tips

- avoid tables and charts, if possible please provide raw data
- avoid pictures and maps if possible.
- avoid using bold, italics or colour to highlight or stress a point
- when using numbering or bullet points avoid using capitals at the beginning unless the name of something
- date format is dd month yyyy (1 June 2021)
- use clear and simple language
- where you need to use technical terms, abbreviations or acronyms, explain what they mean the first time you use them
- if using hyperlinks, make sure the link text describes where the link goes rather than 'click here' Please note equality impact assessments are published on the Dorset Council [website](#)

Before completing this form, please refer to the [supporting guidance](#). The aim of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to consider the equality implications of your policy, strategy, project or service on different groups of people including employees of Dorset Council, residents and users of our services and to consider if there are ways to proactively advance equality.

Where further guidance is needed, please contact the Inclusion Champion or the [Diversity & Inclusion Officer](#).

1. Initial information

Name of the policy, project, strategy, project or service being assessed:

Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028

2. Is this a (please delete those not required):

Review of strategy

3. Is this (please delete those not required):

Both internal and external

4. Please provide a brief overview of its aims and objectives:

The Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy 2024-2028 sets out how Dorset Council, in conjunction with the Dorset Community Safety Partnership (CSP) will tackle domestic abuse over the next 3 years.

Our Vision

For many years the Dorset Community Safety Partnership (CSP) has been working to tackle issues related to domestic abuse. The CSP believes domestic abuse, in all forms, is completely unacceptable and not to be tolerated. It is committed to tackling it by preventing abuse from happening, supporting victims and survivors, and prosecuting offenders.

Our Priorities

prevention: we want to stop domestic abuse from happening altogether. To do that we will focus on actions and initiatives that are preventative so that fewer people become victims.

victims/survivors: victims and survivors of domestic abuse, whoever they are, will have access to services that keep them safe and prevent further harm.

offenders: offenders will be held to account for their action.

Cutting across all the priorities is 'accessibility' ensuring that the system and the services that operate within it, are accessible to everyone who needs them.

5. Please provide the background to this proposal?

In April 2021, the government passed the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The measures in the Act aim to:

- promote awareness: to put abuse at the top of everyone's agenda, including by introducing a statutory definition of domestic abuse
- protect and support victims, including by introducing new Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders
- transform the justice response, including through helping victims to give their best evidence in the criminal courts via video evidence, screens and other special measures, and ensuring that victims of abuse do not suffer further trauma in family court proceedings by being cross-examined by their abuser
- improve performance: the new Domestic Abuse Commissioner will help drive consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse across all local areas and agencies

Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a duty on Tier One local authorities, such as Dorset Council, to assess the need for support and prepare strategies for its provision to victims and their children [who need to reside] in relevant accommodation. The Act places a duty on each Tier One local authority in England to:

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- assess, or make arrangements for the assessment of, the need for domestic abuse support in their area for all victims (and their children) who reside in relevant safe accommodation, including those who come from outside of their area.
- prepare and publish a strategy for the provision of such support to cover their area having regard to the need's assessment.
- give effect to the strategy (through commissioning / de-commissioning decisions)
- monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.
- report back annually to central government.

In January 2022, Dorset Council, in conjunction with the Dorset Community Safety Partnership (CSP) released its first Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy. This revised strategy for 2025-2028 aims to continue the work of the Council and the CSP, setting out the areas it will focus on for the next three years.

It is a legal requirement for the plan to be formally adopted by Dorset Council.

Evidence gathering and engagement

6. What sources of data, evidence or research has been used for this assessment? (e.g national statistics, employee data):

The Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy must be informed by a local needs assessment. The information and evidence gained through the needs assessment has been used to inform this plan along with additional findings from national research.

Sources of evidence:

- Dorset CSP Partnership Strategic Assessment (PSA) 2024/25 (restricted document)
- Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy Needs Assessment (restricted document)
- Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)

In addition, information and insights have been pulled from national sites, with links and references added throughout the impact table.

7. What did this tell you?

The evidence gathered demonstrates that although anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, it affects certain groups more than others, as explained in more detail below.

Updated April 2023

Research has also revealed differences amongst particular groups in accessing services and reporting issues.

These findings have been used to shape and inform partners' domestic abuse strategy.

The strategy has been supported by an updated Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment. This latest edition of the assessment provides a current overview of the domestic abuse in Dorset. It utilises data provided by several local agencies that are involved in tackling domestic abuse to compile a base of evidence. This includes an analysis of the changing volume in reported abuse, demographic profiles of both victims and perpetrators, and the identification of relative underreporting by certain groups. In addition, it includes a section in which the lived experience of local victims is detailed through a series of quotations.

The Needs Assessment aims to guide the focus of this accompanying Domestic Abuse Strategy, also produced by the Dorset Community Safety Partnership, which will steer the local delivery of domestic abuse services for the three-year period 2025-28.

The principal findings from this needs assessment are listed here:

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- the volume of domestic abuse related adult safeguarding referrals has increased over recent months
- the proportion of all instances where local housing Prevention and Relief Duties were served in response to cases of domestic abuse have increased over the past four years.
- 75% of all domestic abuse related crimes recorded by Dorset Police were classified as violence against the person offence
- two thirds of all violence against the person domestic abuse related offences were classed as assaults...
- ...and a further 15% were classed as stalking offences.
- data from Adult Safeguarding suggests that psychological domestic abuse is more prevalent than inferred from the records held by the Police.
- in Dorset the volume of domestic abuse cases classed as 'high risk' is increasing.
- not all incidences of domestic abuse reported to the local Police involved victims who were Dorset residents. Between 2020 and 2023, 15% of reported domestic abuse had victims who were out of county residents.
- in Dorset there is a significant underreporting of domestic abuse to the Police among younger males (aged 16 to 25), younger females (aged 16 to 20), and older women (aged over 54).

- there is also significant underreporting of domestic abuse to Paragon, especially from younger and older females, and from male victims (all ages).
- in comparison to those living in urban areas, underreporting is more prevalent among female victims living in rural parts of Dorset.
- victims, of all genders, who live in Dorset's most deprived areas are more likely to contact the Police to report their domestic abuse rather than Paragon. Victims from wealthier areas are more likely to contact Paragon than they are to contact the Police.
- over half (54%) of the domestic abuse cases dealt with by Paragon between 2020 and 2023 came from victims who lived in households with at least one cohabiting dependant.
- a significant minority (27%) of all domestic abuse related reports to Dorset Police involved perpetrators who lived outside of Dorset.
- only two-thirds (67%) of cases reported to Dorset Police involved a Dorset County resident victim and a Dorset County resident suspect.
- a clear majority (73%) of domestic abuse related incidents reported to Dorset Police involved a male perpetrator.
- the majority (53%) of domestic abuse cases recorded by the Police featured suspects – of all genders – that were aged between twenty-five and forty-four.
- just under half (47%) of all known domestic abuse suspects were 'repeat' perpetrators.
- approximately half of all domestic abuse events reported to the Police – and almost two-thirds of those reported to Paragon - involved abuse between former partners. 20% of Police cases, and 10% of Paragon cases, involved intra-familial, often intergenerational, abuse.
- a sizeable proportion of domestic abuse events recorded by the Police involved victims and perpetrators of a similar age, often between twenty and forty years old.

8. Who have you engaged and consulted with as part of this assessment?

The Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy has been written with the help of a range of partners including the Police, Probation, Dorset Domestic Abuse Forum and health services, who have provided information, insight and context.

This impact assessment has been written by members of Dorset Council's Community Safety Team.

9. Is further information needed to help inform decision making?

No

Is an EQIA required?

Not every proposal will need an EqIA. The data and research should inform your decision whether to continue with this EqIA. If you decide that your proposal does not need an EqIA, please answer the following question:

This policy, strategy, project or service does not require an EqIA because (provide details):

Not applicable

Assessing the impact on different groups of people

For each of the protected characteristics groups below, please explain whether your proposal could have a positive, negative, unclear or no impact. Where an impact has been identified, please explain what it is and if unclear or negative please explain what mitigating actions will be taken.

- use the evidence you have gathered to inform your decision making.
- consider impacts on residents, service users and employees separately.
- if your strategy, policy, project or service contains options you may wish to consider providing an assessment for each option.
- see guidance for more information about the different [protected characteristics](#).

Key to impacts

Positive Impact	• the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.
Negative Impact	• protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against
Neutral Impact	• no change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	• not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Age	Positive	<u>Domestic Abuse</u> Partners' latest strategic needs assessment identified that of all the domestic abuse victims reported to Dorset Police, 70% were women of any age, and 55% were women aged under 35. The assessment also showed that domestic abuse is significantly under reported by young adults and the elderly. The gap between the experience of domestic abuse and its reporting to the police was especially notable among the sixteen- to nineteen-year-old cohort. The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)¹ indicated that nationally 9.0% of women in that age group, and 7.0% of men, have experienced abuse within the past year. In contrast, Dorset's corresponding figures are 2.1% and 0.8% respectively. Rates of under reporting of domestic abuse among older age groups are also of concern, especially local women aged between fifty-five and fifty-nine. For this cohort, the CSEW suggests that, nationally, rates of domestic abuse are as high as 6.6%. The corresponding rate recorded in Dorset was 0.6%. <u>EqlA Response</u> Information and awareness raising campaigns to be targeted to specific groups, in particular younger people and older people. Content and delivery of campaigns to be fit for purpose according to target groups. Information on the impacts for different groups to be included in relevant training packages. Ensure services are accessible to all groups.

¹ The Crime Survey of England and Wales is conducted quarterly. It is based on public interviews, rather than reported crime, and is regarded as a more accurate assessment of the public's experience of crime.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		Delivery of specific actions / initiatives set out in the strategy for example: • Develop solutions that enable people who find it harder to access services to find the right support at the right time. • Use local learning, national innovation and best practice, to continue to develop the local safe accommodation offer. • Review the Dorset (Pan Dorset) Domestic Abuse Commissioning Charter 'enabling a whole systems approach to domestic abuse'. • Use learning from the needs assessment to inform the local offer. • Further develop our approach to enabling those with lived experience, including children and young people, help shape the local response.
Disability	Positive	<u>Domestic Abuse</u> Information and research from SafeLives* states: <i>Disabled people experience higher rates of domestic abuse than non-disabled people.</i> <i>Disabled women are twice as likely to experience abuse than non-disabled women, and disabled people are more likely to experience abuse from an adult family member compared to non-disabled people (14% vs 6%). Studies have shown that disabled women are twice as likely to experience domestic abuse and also twice as likely to suffer assault and rape. Yet our Marac data shows that nationally only 3.9% of referrals were for disabled victims, significantly lower than our recommendation of 16% or higher Our research also shows low referral rates for disabled people into domestic abuse services.</i> Link to the report - Disabled people and domestic abuse spotlight - SafeLives <u>EQIA Response</u>

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		Information and awareness raising campaigns to be targeted to specific groups, particularly those who have a disability. Content and delivery of campaigns to be fit for purpose according to target groups. Information on the impacts for different groups to be included in relevant training packages. Ensure services are accessible to all groups. Delivery of specific actions / initiatives set out in the strategy, for example: • Develop solutions that enable people who find it harder to access services to find the right support at the right time. • Use local learning, national innovation and best practice, to continue to develop the local safe accommodation offer. • Review the Dorset (Pan Dorset) Domestic Abuse Commissioning Charter 'enabling a whole systems approach to domestic abuse'. • Use learning from the needs assessment to inform the local offer. • Further develop our approach to enabling those with lived experience, including children and young people, help shape the local response.
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Positive	<u>Domestic Abuse</u> Whilst there is limited research and evidence to indicate whether there is a greater or lower risk of being a victim of domestic abuse because of gender reassignment / gender identity, experiences for this community may differ and there may be greater challenges and barriers in accessing support.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		Key findings from a 2019 Briefing by SafeLives stated: • <i>Transgender victims/survivors experience specific types of abuse that can be linked to their trans identities.</i> • <i>Trans victims/survivors experience large numbers of additional needs, particularly in relation to mental health.</i> • <i>Trans people who access domestic abuse services report that this experience has positive outcomes on their lives.</i> • <i>However, only a small proportion of trans victims/survivors with additional mental health needs are supported with these by domestic abuse services. Given the large numbers of trans victims/survivors who have mental health needs, it is vital that this issue be addressed.</i> Link to report - Transgender-victim-survivors-experiences-of-domestic-abuse-briefing.pdf <u>EQIA Response</u> Information and awareness raising campaigns to be targeted to specific groups. For example, gender reassignment and gender identity. Content and delivery of campaigns to be fit for purpose according to target groups. Information on the impacts for different groups to be included in relevant training packages. Delivery of specific actions / initiatives set out in the strategy, for example: • Develop solutions that enable people who find it harder to access services to find the right support at the right time. • Use local learning, national innovation and best practice, to continue to develop the local safe accommodation offer.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		• Review the Dorset (Pan Dorset) Domestic Abuse Commissioning Charter 'enabling a whole systems approach to domestic abuse'. • Use learning from the needs assessment to inform the local offer. • Further develop our approach to enabling those with lived experience, including children and young people, help shape the local response.
Marriage or civil partnership	Neutral	There is little evidence to indicate whether being married or in a civil partnership results in being more or less likely to be a victim of domestic abuse.
Pregnancy and maternity	Positive	<u>Domestic Abuse</u> The Women's Aid 2019 Toolkit '<i>Supporting women and babies after domestic abuse</i>' highlights: • 20-30% of pregnant women report incidents of physical violence • Around 36% of women experience verbal abuse during pregnancy • 14% report very severe or life threatening violence • 20% of pregnant women are subjected to sexual violence Link to report - Supporting-women-and-babies-after-domestic-abuse.pdf It is also recognised that risks can escalate and heighten during pregnancy and is a key indicator when assessing high risk domestic abuse. <u>EQIA Response</u> Information and awareness raising campaigns to be targeted to specific groups. For example, providing information in maternity wards, hospitals, other health settings.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		Content and delivery of campaigns to be fit for purpose according to target groups. Information on the impacts for different groups to be included in relevant training packages. Delivery of specific actions / initiatives set out in the strategy, for example: • Develop solutions that enable people who find it harder to access services to find the right support at the right time. • Use local learning, national innovation and best practice, to continue to develop the local safe accommodation offer. • Review the Dorset (Pan Dorset) Domestic Abuse Commissioning Charter 'enabling a whole systems approach to domestic abuse'. • Use learning from the needs assessment to inform the local offer. • Further develop our approach to enabling those with lived experience, including children and young people, help shape the local response.
Race and Ethnicity	Positive	<u>Domestic Abuse</u> A recent study by the Home Office (2024) identified varying rates of domestic abuse experienced by different ethnic groups. It was estimated that 4.8% of the White British population were victims of abuse during the 12 months to March 2023. By contrast, the figure among mixed race adults was 65% higher (7.9%), while that for Asian victims was 42% lower (2.0%). Local reports of domestic abuse experienced by minority ethnic groups have historically been limited, and calculating accurate comparable figures for Dorset is not possible. <u>EqlA Response</u>

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		Information and awareness raising campaigns to be targeted to specific groups. For example, those from different ethnic communities. Content and delivery of campaigns to be fit for purpose according to target groups. Information on the impacts for different groups to be included in relevant training packages. Delivery of specific actions / initiatives set out in the strategy, for example: • Develop solutions that enable people who find it harder to access services to find the right support at the right time. • Use local learning, national innovation and best practice, to continue to develop the local safe accommodation offer. • Review the Dorset (Pan Dorset) Domestic Abuse Commissioning Charter 'enabling a whole systems approach to domestic abuse'. • Use learning from the needs assessment to inform the local offer. • Further develop our approach to enabling those with lived experience, including children and young people, help shape the local response.
Religion and belief	Positive	<u>Domestic Abuse</u> A 2017 spotlight by Safelives states: <i>People at risk of 'honour'-based violence (HBV) and forced marriage experience domestic abuse for longer, on average, than those not at risk. They are also more likely to experience harm from multiple perpetrators.</i>

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		• <i>Before accessing support, victims at risk of 'honour'-based violence experienced abuse for 2 years longer (5 years vs 3 years) than those not identified at risk</i> • <i>23% of victims at risk were not eligible for most benefits, tax credits or housing association</i> • <i>Victims were more than 7 times more likely to be experiencing abuse from multiple perpetrators</i> • <i>57% of victims at risk had visited their GP in the past 12 months and 19% had attended A&E as a direct result of the abuse</i> • <i>Only 6% of people were referred to domestic abuse services by health professionals</i> Link to report - ‘Honour’-based violence and forced marriage spotlight - SafeLives <u>EQIA Response</u> Information and awareness raising campaigns to be targeted to specific groups. For example, working with different faith groups. Content and delivery of campaigns to be fit for purpose according to target groups. Information on the impacts for different groups to be included in relevant training packages. Delivery of specific actions / initiatives set out in the strategy, for example: for example: • Develop solutions that enable people who find it harder to access services to find the right support at the right time. • Use local learning, national innovation and best practice, to continue to develop the local safe accommodation offer.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		• Review the Dorset (Pan Dorset) Domestic Abuse Commissioning Charter 'enabling a whole systems approach to domestic abuse'. • Use learning from the needs assessment to inform the local offer. • Further develop our approach to enabling those with lived experience, including children and young people, help shape the local response.
Sex (consider men and women)	Positive	<u>Domestic Abuse and Stalking</u> The CSEW estimates that 2.1 million people aged 16 years and over experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2023. Of these 1.4 million (approx. 67%) were women and 751,000 (approx. 36%) were men. Partners' latest PSA showed that of all individual victims of stalking, 80% were female. A third of the recorded stalking crimes set out in partners' latest needs assessment had no associated perpetrator identified. Where perpetrators were identified, 80% were male. <u>EqIA Response</u> Information and awareness raising campaigns to be targeted to specific groups. For example, older women. Content and delivery of campaigns to be fit for purpose according to target groups. Information on the impacts for different groups to be included in relevant training packages. Delivery of specific actions / initiatives set out in the strategy, for example: for example: • Develop solutions that enable people who find it harder to access services to find the right support at the right time.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		• Use local learning, national innovation and best practice, to continue to develop the local safe accommodation offer. • Review the Dorset (Pan Dorset) Domestic Abuse Commissioning Charter 'enabling a whole systems approach to domestic abuse'. • Use learning from the needs assessment to inform the local offer. • Further develop our approach to enabling those with lived experience, including children and young people, help shape the local response.
Sexual orientation	Positive	<u>Domestic Abuse</u> Whilst there is little data to suggest those who identify as LGBT+ are more or less likely to be victims of domestic abuse, we do know there can be additional barriers when trying to access services. A report by SafeLives states: <i>The most common portrayal of domestic abuse is that of a male perpetrator and female victim within a heterosexual relationship. But domestic abuse can happen to anyone and be perpetrated by anyone. This includes people of all gender identities and sexual orientations and in many types of relationships.</i> Key findings • <i>Statutory and non-statutory services are missing opportunities to identify LGBT+ victims, survivors and perpetrators of domestic abuse</i> • <i>LGBT+ victims and survivors are experiencing high levels of risk and complex needs before they access support</i> • <i>LGBT+ victims and survivors need support tailored to their needs and circumstances</i> • <i>A victim's sexual orientation or gender identity can sometimes be targeted as part of the abuse</i> • <i>Societal attitudes and lack of inclusion are preventing LGBT+ victims and survivors</i>

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		<i>from accessing the support they need to get safe and recover, and mean we aren't identifying and stopping perpetrators at the earliest opportunity</i> Link to report - LGBT+ people and domestic abuse spotlight - SafeLives <u>EQIA Response</u> Information and awareness raising campaigns to be targeted to specific groups, particularly the LGBT+ Community. Content and delivery of campaigns to be fit for purpose according to target groups. Information on the impacts for different groups to be included in relevant training packages. Ensure services are accessible to all groups. Delivery of specific actions / initiatives set out in the strategy, for example: • Develop solutions that enable people who find it harder to access services to find the right support at the right time. • Use local learning, national innovation and best practice, to continue to develop the local safe accommodation offer. • Review the Dorset (Pan Dorset) Domestic Abuse Commissioning Charter 'enabling a whole systems approach to domestic abuse'. • Use learning from the needs assessment to inform the local offer. • Further develop our approach to enabling those with lived experience, including children and young people, help shape the local response.
People with caring responsibilities	Positive	<u>Domestic Abuse</u> Information on the caring responsibilities of local victims of domestic abuse is extremely limited.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		Such information is not routinely collected by the Police. An indication of the prevalence of abuse among carers is provided by records kept by Paragon, Dorset's Integrated Domestic Abuse Service partner. For the period 2020-23, 41% of all Paragon's clients reported that they lived in a household with at least one 'dependent' (which might include children, elderly relatives and others in need of support). Nationally, the Home Office reported (2022) that in 8% of the Domestic Homicide Reviews analysed, the victims were carers and in just over half of these, the perpetrator was the person being cared for. <u>EQIA Response</u> Information and awareness raising campaigns to be targeted to specific groups, particularly carers, both as victims and perpetrators. Content and delivery of campaigns to be fit for purpose according to target groups. Information on the impacts for different groups to be included in relevant training packages. Ensure services are accessible to all groups. Delivery of specific actions / initiatives set out in the strategy, for example: • Develop solutions that enable people who find it harder to access services to find the right support at the right time. • Use local learning, national innovation and best practice, to continue to develop the local safe accommodation offer. • Review the Dorset (Pan Dorset) Domestic Abuse Commissioning Charter 'enabling a whole systems approach to domestic abuse'. • Use learning from the needs assessment to inform the local offer.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		Further develop our approach to enabling those with lived experience, including children and young people, help shape the local response.
Rural isolation	Positive	<u>Domestic Abuse</u> Data from the CSEW indicates that the reporting of domestic abuse in Dorset is notably lower than expected within the County's rural population. The data illustrates that, while nationally domestic abuse is slightly more prevalent in rural areas, the reporting of incidents in Dorset is highest in its urban areas. Locally, domestic abuse is under reported in both urban and rural areas, but the extent to which it is under reported is greater in the county's rural settings. <u>EQIA Response</u> Information and awareness raising campaigns to be targeted to those living in rural communities, utilising local assets and community groups. Content and delivery of campaigns to be fit for purpose according to target groups. Information on the impacts for different groups to be included in relevant training packages. Ensure services are accessible to all groups. Delivery of specific actions / initiatives set out in the strategy, for example: - Develop solutions that enable people who find it harder to access services to find the right support at the right time. - Use local learning, national innovation and best practice, to continue to develop the local safe accommodation offer. - Review the Dorset (Pan Dorset) Domestic Abuse Commissioning Charter 'enabling a whole systems approach to domestic abuse'.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		• Use learning from the needs assessment to inform the local offer. • Further develop our approach to enabling those with lived experience, including children and young people, help shape the local response.
Socio-economic deprivation	Positive	<u>Domestic Abuse</u> There is compelling evidence that, in Dorset, domestic abuse is linked to higher levels of deprivation (PSA 2024/25). This local connection between increased deprivation and abuse is reflected in the data collected through the CSEW. National figures also confirm the link between poverty and domestic abuse. According to a study undertaken by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), women living in households with an income of less than £10,000 were more than four times as likely (14.3%) to have experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months than women living in households with an income of £50,000 or more (3.3%). <u>EQIA Response</u> Information and awareness raising campaigns to be targeted to specific groups, particularly across different socio economic demographics. Content and delivery of campaigns to be fit for purpose according to target groups. Information on the impacts for different groups to be included in relevant training packages. Ensure services are accessible to all groups. Delivery of specific actions / initiatives set out in the strategy, for example: • Develop solutions that enable people who find it harder to access services to find the right support at the right time.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		• Use local learning, national innovation and best practice, to continue to develop the local safe accommodation offer. • Review the Dorset (Pan Dorset) Domestic Abuse Commissioning Charter 'enabling a whole systems approach to domestic abuse'. • Use learning from the needs assessment to inform the local offer. • Further develop our approach to enabling those with lived experience, including children and young people, help shape the local response.
Single parents	Neutral	There is little evidence to indicate whether being a single parent results in being more or less likely to be a victim of domestic abuse.
Armed forces communities	Positive	<u>Domestic Abuse</u> The Government's 'Armed forces domestic abuse: a handbook for civilian support services' states <i>There is no evidence to suggest that domestic abuse is any more prevalent within the UK Armed Forces, however the following points could place additional pressure on families:</i> • <i>research has indicated that people between the ages of 20 and 40 are at highest risk of experiencing domestic abuse – this age range is strongly represented in the armed forces</i> • <i>regular assignments and geographic separation can isolate victims by cutting them off from their family and support systems</i> • <i>regular assignments can make it difficult for a spouse to maintain a career, resulting in them being more economically dependent on the serving partner</i> • <i>regular deployments and reunions create unique stresses on armed forces families.</i>

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		In addition there may be additional barriers facing those in the armed forces accessing advice and support. <i>fear of career consequence, either for them if they are serving, or their serving partner</i> <i>the potential impact on housing, economic security and pensions</i> <i>a perceived stigma attached to male victims</i> Link to report Armed forces domestic abuse: a handbook for civilian support services - GOV.UK <u>EQIA Response</u> Information and awareness raising campaigns to be targeted to specific groups, particularly the armed forces, linking in with the councils Armed forces programme coordinator. Content and delivery of campaigns to be fit for purpose according to target groups. Information on the impacts for different groups to be included in relevant training packages. Ensure services are accessible to all groups. Delivery of specific actions / initiatives set out in the strategy, for example: - Develop solutions that enable people who find it harder to access services to find the right support at the right time. - Use local learning, national innovation and best practice, to continue to develop the local safe accommodation offer. - Review the Dorset (Pan Dorset) Domestic Abuse Commissioning Charter 'enabling a whole systems approach to domestic abuse'. - Use learning from the needs assessment to inform the local offer. - Further develop our approach to enabling those with lived experience, including

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		children and young people, help shape the local response.

Please provide a summary of the impacts:

Through the completion of a local needs assessment and work to complete this EqlA, (including an examination of national information) it has been identified that domestic abuse can affect certain groups more than others. It has also identified under-reporting and less engagement by certain groups as described in the impact table.

Partners must be aware of these issues and ensure they are considered when delivering the Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy, for example, by ensuring awareness raising and communication campaigns are targeted to those groups who are known to under-report, support services actively work to ensure they are accessible to all groups and through targeted initiatives. These are captured in the action plan below.

It is also necessary to undertake further work to better understand the needs of Dorset's diverse communities in relation to domestic abuse issues and an action to do this has been included in the plan below.

Action Plan

Summarise any actions required as a result of this EqIA.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
Some groups are affected more than others Under-reporting by some groups	Ensure that specific groups (as described in the impact table) are targeted when delivering awareness raising campaigns.	CSP Partners (Communications)	Ongoing with specific attention paid to regular / cyclical campaigns
	Ensure the information and advice being provided to specific groups (as described in the impact table) is fit for purpose and meets their needs.	CSP Partners	Ongoing – to be specifically addressed in relevant actions for 2025/26
	Ensure training includes information on all people effected by domestic abuse.	CSP Partners (those providing training)	Through delivery of 2025/26 training plans
	Ensure services, including commissioned services, are accessible to everyone.	CSP Service Providers and Commissioners	Through ongoing assessment of service delivery and commissioning.
Gaps in knowledge	Undertake research to better understand the needs of our diverse communities, including LGBTQ+ people and those with protective characteristics, and how we can ensure those needs are best met.	Ian Denness (Community Safety Team, Dorset Council)	Through ongoing research and analysis to support updated

	Reports of domestic abuse from some of our communities are relatively low. Knowledge of the extent of abuse among experienced (and committed) by non-white and non-heterosexual victims (and perpetrators) is especially limited. Research, drawn from a combination of locally sourced data, nationally commissioned reports and studies undertaken in other locations, will be used to gain a greater understanding of the prevalence and nature of abuse experienced by these diverse communities, with the results and associated actions incorporated within future editions of the Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment and the Domestic Abuse Strategy.		versions of the strategy.
	Undertake work to better understand under reporting of domestic abuse in rural areas.	Ian Denness (Community Safety Team, Dorset Council)	Through ongoing research and analysis to support updated versions of the strategy.

Sign Off

Officer completing this EqlA: Ian Grant, Programme Coordinator for Community Safety

Officers involved in completing the EqlA: Ian Denness, Andy Frost, Diane Evans,

Date of completion: 02 June 2025

Version Number: 4

EqlA review date:

Equality Lead Sign Off: James Palfreman-Kay (19/08/25)

Next Steps:

- the EqlA will be reviewed by Communications and Engagement and if in agreement, your EqlA will be signed off.
- if not, we will get in touch to chat further about the EqlA, to get a better understanding.
- EqlA authors are responsible to ensuring any actions in the action plan are implemented.

Please send to [Diversity and Inclusion Officer](#)

People & Health Overview

15 September 2025

Age Friendly Communities; part of the Communities for All Council priority

For Recommendation to Cabinet

Cabinet Member:

Cllr S Robinson, Adult Social Care

Local Councillor(s):

All

Senior Leadership Team:

J Price, Executive Director of People - Adults

Report author and job title: Sam Poole, Corporate Director of Commissioning & Improvement

Email: samuel.poole@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Dorset Council

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)

- 1.1 This report provides an update to the People & Health Overview Committee on progress made towards developing Age Friendly Communities across Dorset as part of the 'Communities for All' priority in the Council Plan 2024-29.
- 1.2 Dorset has one of the oldest demographics of any county in the UK, with 30% of residents aged over 65. The Council is committed to ensuring Dorset remains a place where people can age well, live independently, and stay connected to their communities. This report outlines the progress made to date and sets out a commitment to embedding age-friendly principles across services, infrastructure, and community partnerships throughout the Dorset Council area. This work is central to the Council's prevention agenda and complements existing programmes such as the Thriving Communities initiative, which laid the groundwork for community-led transformation. By enabling older residents to stay active, socially engaged, and well-supported within their local areas, the programme aims to reduce future demand on health and care services while enhancing quality of life.
- 1.3 Becoming an Age Friendly County means creating inclusive, supportive environments where people of all ages, especially older adults, can live healthy, active, and connected lives. It involves adapting public spaces,

transport, housing, and services to meet the needs of an ageing population, whilst promoting independence, wellbeing, and social participation. Age Friendly Communities value older people's contributions, reduces isolation, and ensures access to opportunities and support. For Dorset this means aligning local planning, commissioning, and community development with the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Age Friendly framework, enabling residents to age well in place and strengthening resilience across generations.

1.4 The eight domains defined by the World Health Organisation are:

1. Outdoor spaces and buildings.
2. Transportation.
3. Housing.
4. Social participation.
5. Respect and social inclusion.
6. Civic participation and employment.
7. Communication and information.
8. Community support and health services.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 This report asks the People & Health Overview to review the report and make the following recommendations to Cabinet:

i) Endorse Dorset's application for Age Friendly accreditation by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

ii) Endorse the integration of Age-Friendly principles into whole council strategy and planning considerations including Adult Social Care locality practice, commissioning and strategic planning.

iii) Through the Council's OFC programme (Commissioning & Procurement & Community Partnerships Programmes), integrate age friendly principles into design of infrastructure, transport, housing, and public spaces.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

3.1 According to recent research, nearly one-third of Dorset's population is aged 65 or over, significantly higher than the national average of 19%, with a median age of 52 compared to 40.5 nationally. Dorset also has the highest proportion of residents aged 85+ in the UK, and an old age dependency ratio of 537 (vs. 297 nationally), meaning there are 537 people aged 65+ for every 1,000 working-age adults.

3.2 As a result, Dorset Council faces growing financial pressures, with adult social care accounting for £159.6 million, over 38% of the 2025/26 net budget. Rising demand, particularly for complex care, combined with limited national

funding, highlights the urgent need for preventative approaches. Delivering community programmes, such as Age Friendly Communities offers a strategic solution to reduce future demand, delay formal care, and improve outcomes, whilst delivering long-term sustainability and value.

4. The report

- 4.1 Dorset Council has a unique opportunity to lead the development of Age Friendly Communities, responding to its ageing demographic through the strategic ambition set out in the Dorset Council Plan 2024–2029 under the ‘Communities for All’ priority.
- 4.2 In July 2025, the Council formally registered its intent to become an Age Friendly County with the nationally recognised Centre for Ageing Better, aligning its local framework with the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) eight domains. The first step toward accreditation is planned for September 2025, demonstrating Dorset’s commitment to inclusive, resilient environments that support healthy ageing.
- 4.3 The WHO domains are effective in framing an all-age approach, building from the Adult Social Care commissioning strategies and align with the ‘Communities for All’ priority delivered through the Community Partnerships Programme. The Age Friendly Communities Framework will ensure joined-up delivery across Council services and localities. This ambition is also embedded within Dorset’s Health & Wellbeing Strategy, which recognises Age-Friendly Communities as a key enabler for creating communities for all ages. Delivery will be driven through place-based partnerships, enabling local areas to tailor interventions to their population needs and measure progress through shared outcomes. This ensures alignment across health, care, and community sectors, and supports integrated planning and delivery.
- 4.4 The next phase will focus on embedding age-friendly principles into planning, infrastructure, and service design across Dorset’s towns and parishes, rural and urban, supported by initiatives in mobility, public space, and lived experience through ‘People Panels’. This locally led model draws on the lived experience of older residents and recognises the distinct needs of Dorset’s diverse communities. It also acknowledges the economic contribution of older people, from volunteering and caregiving to entrepreneurship and local spending, and will engage employers, Chambers of Commerce, and business networks to promote age-inclusive development. Community engagement is central to this approach, ensuring that local voices shape priorities, design solutions, and lead implementation. By integrating age-friendly principles from strategic planning to neighbourhood design, Dorset is positioned as a national leader in place-based ageing well, capable of attracting external funding and influencing policy.

- 4.5 The programme aims to create a sustainable model of community-led transformation, investing in VCSE-led co-design grants, falls prevention, transport pilots, and creative health initiatives that directly address the needs of older residents and those who will age in the years to come. The impact is both social and economic. Research¹ has shown that Age Friendly Communities improve health outcomes, reduce demand on statutory services, and enhance civic participation. They also address wider determinants of health, such as housing, transport, and social connection, aligning with Dorset's broader prevention agenda and promoting a shift from reactive care to proactive support. This also aligns with NHS and ICB priorities around prevention, integrated care, and population health, offering a community-based approach to reducing demand and improving outcomes.
- ¹ Centre for Ageing Better. (2025). Age-friendly Communities Impact Report. Available at: <https://ageing-better.org.uk/resources/age-friendly-communities-impact-report>
- 4.6 International case studies from both rural and urban areas, such as Ireland's Louth and Dublin, and Canada's Nova Scotia and Toronto, demonstrate the effectiveness of age-friendly development in improving access, reducing isolation, and supporting active ageing. These examples reinforce the value of empowering local communities to lead change using the WHO framework.
- 4.7 In the UK, Manchester stands out as a leading example. It was the first UK city to join the WHO Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities in 2010. This commitment is further evidenced by Manchester's £1.5bn investment in later-life housing, as highlighted in a recent article by Positive News, which aims to redefine ageing through inclusive design and community integration, directly supporting the city's Age Friendly strategy. Through its programme, the city and its more rural surrounding areas have embedded age-friendly principles into neighbourhood planning, service design, and cultural engagement which has had tangible improvements in reducing isolation, promoting dignity, and ensuring older residents have a voice in shaping their communities. For Dorset, these lessons reinforce the value of empowering both towns and parishes to lead local change, using the WHO framework to create environments where ageing is supported with dignity, accessibility, and opportunity.
- 4.8 The emerging Health Science University (HSU) partnership offers a unique opportunity to build a future-ready workforce to drive innovation in ageing well. Through co-designed training, research, and placements, Dorset can lead new models of care and embed age-friendly principles into education and practice.
- 4.9 Dorset Council is committed to being an Age-Friendly Employer, recognising the value and contribution of older workers across its workforce. This pledge,

coordinated by the Centre for Ageing Better, promotes inclusive recruitment, flexible working, and lifelong learning opportunities for employees of all ages. It aligns with the Council's wider ambition to embed age-friendly principles not only in communities and services, but also within its organisational culture, ensuring that older adults are valued, supported, and empowered both as residents and as members of the workforce.

- 4.10 In summary, using the Age Friendly principles as a frame to the Communities for all programme is a strategic, evidence-led response to Dorset Council's ageing population. Through national partnership, WHO alignment, and local investment, the Council is building a future where older people are valued, supported, and connected. Cabinet's endorsement will support Dorset to secure WHO accreditation, expand community engagement, and deliver measurable improvements in wellbeing, inclusion, and system efficiency.

5. Alternative options considered

- 5.1 Standalone investments in health, housing, and transport have been explored, but often lack the integration and community engagement needed for lasting impact. The Age Friendly Communities programme provides a cohesive framework that unites existing workstreams and aligns with wider place-based strategies, supporting delivery of Dorset Council's 'Communities for All' priority through locally led, joined-up action.
- 5.2 Acting as a catalyst for collaboration across council services, VCSEs, businesses, and residents, the programme embeds age-friendly principles into everyday planning and decision-making.

6. Legal considerations

- 6.1 The Age Friendly Communities programme supports Dorset Council's statutory duties under the Care Act 2014 by promoting wellbeing, preventing care needs, and fostering integration across health and social care. It also aligns with the Equality Act 2010 by advancing inclusion for older adults, disabled residents, and carers, with co-production and inclusive design ensuring compliance with consultation, accessibility, and non-discrimination requirements.

7. Financial implications

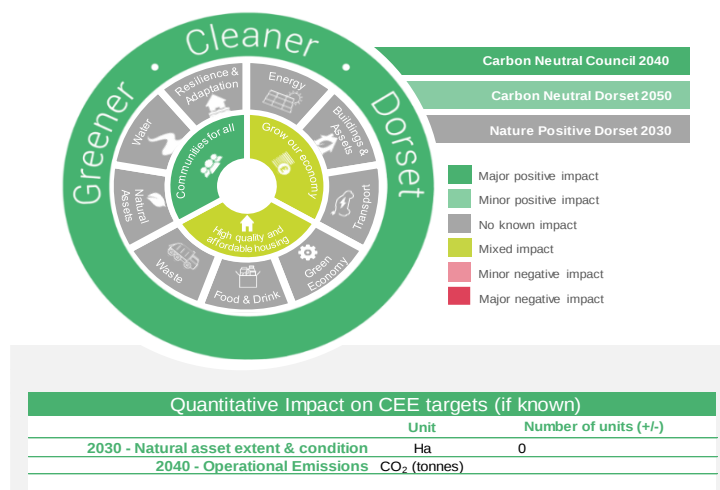
- 7.1 Dorset Council faces significant financial pressures due to its ageing population, which is one of the oldest of any county in the UK. In 2025–26, adult social care accounts for £159.6 million, representing over 38% of the council's total net budget. This proportion continues to rise as demand increases, particularly for complex care and support services. The financial strain is compounded by limited national funding and a growing need for preventative approaches. Delivering Age Friendly Communities offers a

strategic opportunity to reduce future demand, delay entry into formal care, and improve outcomes, delivering long-term sustainability.

- 7.2 Cabinet is asked to consider support, through the 'Communities for All' programme to deliver Dorset's Age Friendly County Framework. A detailed funding assessment will be developed, identifying internal and external sources including national grants, VCSE contributions, and potential co-investment. This approach will enable town-level implementation of WHO-aligned initiatives that measurably improve older people's wellbeing, reduce system demand, and embed dignity and prevention across public services.
- 7.3 The programme is expected to generate measurable cost avoidance across NHS and adult social care systems by:
- Reducing fall-related hospital admissions
 - Addressing loneliness and isolation
 - Delaying or preventing entry into formal adult social care
- 7.4 We know the connection between isolation and loneliness and in the UK that this can result in many people requiring health and social care services. The Centre for Social Justice research estimates that for older people alone severe loneliness costs the UK over £6,000 per person in Health and social care services.
- 7.5 This is based on robust national evidence and align with Dorset Council's prevention agenda, NHS priorities, and adult social care reform. The programme will also position Dorset to attract external funding and secure international Age Friendly accreditation, reinforcing its leadership in place-based public health and ageing well.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

- 8.1 Age Friendly design principles promote walkable communities, accessible transport, and localised support, contributing to reduced car dependency and more sustainable neighbourhoods. The climate wheel shows the impact:



9. Well-being and health implications

- 9.1 Age-Friendly Communities have a proven impact on health, wellbeing, and inclusion by creating environments that support mobility, social connection, and access to services, not only for older adults, but also for people with disabilities, long-term conditions, and those aspiring to age well. In the Dorset Council area, implementing the WHO framework would enable the council to track measurable improvements across eight domains of ageing well, including reduced hospital admissions, increased healthy life expectancy, improved housing and transport accessibility, and enhanced community health services. Success will be monitored through indicators such as reduced falls, increased social participation, and feedback from Older People's Panels. By embedding these metrics, the council can transparently report progress, deliver long-term benefits for residents, and reduce pressure on health and care systems.
- 9.2 Importantly, age-friendly initiatives also create intergenerational opportunities, fostering stronger relationships between younger and older residents. Shared spaces, community programmes, and volunteering schemes can help bridge generational divides, reduce stereotypes, and build mutual respect, benefiting the wellbeing of all age groups and strengthening community cohesion.

10. Other implications

- 10.1 Age Friendly Communities span all areas of council activity and require coordinated, cross-directorate working. While Adult Social Care plays a central role, successful implementation also relies on integration across housing, planning, transport, and economic development. A whole-system approach is essential to ensure age-friendly principles are consistently embedded into policy, service design, and delivery across the organisation.
- 10.2 The programme strengthens the role of the voluntary and community sector by supporting co-production, expanding local delivery capacity, and enabling VCSE organisations to lead inclusive, preventative initiatives that reflect the needs and aspirations of older residents.

11. Risk implications

- 11.1 **HAVING CONSIDERED:** the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: HIGH/MEDIUM

Residual Risk: MEDIUM

Failure to invest in age-friendly infrastructure and community support risks increased isolation, higher demand for residential care, and widening health inequalities.

12. Equalities

- 12.1 The proposal supports inclusion and equity for older adults, carers, disabled residents, and those ageing alone or without family support.
- 12.2 While age is a key factor in shaping access to communities, it is not the only barrier older people may face. Many individuals experience multiple layers of disadvantage, for example, being an older person of colour, LGBTQ+, disabled, or from a low-income background. These intersecting identities can compound exclusion and reduce access to services, spaces, and opportunities. This means actively considering demographic diversity, listening to underrepresented voices, and designing environments that reflect and respect the full spectrum of lived experiences among older residents.
- 12.3 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the Age Friendly Communities programme, highlighting clear benefits for older people, carers, and disabled residents, and identifying further opportunities to strengthen inclusion through community-led solutions and enhanced data.

13. Appendices

- 13.1 None

14. Background papers

- 14.1 None

15. Report sign-off

- 15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s).

People and Health Overview Committee Work Programme

Meeting Date: 15 September 2025

Report Title	Aims and Objectives	Lead Officers / Members	Other Information
Empty Homes Strategy	Part of the wider Housing Strategy, this report will introduce a strategy which sets out how the Council intends to bring long term empty properties back into use.	Steven March – Service Manager for Housing Standards Cllr Gill Taylor – Cabinet Member for Health and Housing	Consideration by Cabinet following the committee.
Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028		Andy Frost – Service Manager for Community Safety Cllr Gill Taylor – Cabinet Member for Health and Housing	Dorset Council has a legal requirement to create a Domestic Abuse Strategy as set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. This is the second Strategy the Council has written since legislation came into place. The Strategy has been endorsed by the Dorset Community Safety Partnership and now requires formal sign off by the Council.
Age Friendly Communities	To provide an update on the Age Friendly Communities Programme	Sam Poole – Corporate Director for Commissioning and Improvement Cllr Steve Robinson – Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	

Meeting Date: 3 November 2025

Report Title	Aims and Objectives	Lead Officers / Members	Other Information
Housing Allocations Policy		Sarah How – Service Manager for Housing Register and Lettings Cllr Gill Taylor – Cabinet Member for Health and Housing	Proposed revisions to the councils Housing Allocations Policy, which governs how social housing is allocated to applicants on the housing register. The revised policy update aims to ensure fairness, transparency and compliance with legal requirements while addressing local housing need.
Dorset Tenancy Strategy	Review of the Dorset Tenancy Strategy and to provide feedback ahead of consideration by Cabinet.	Sharon Attwater – Service Manager for Housing Strategy and Performance Cllr Gill Taylor – Cabinet Member for Health and Housing	A tenancy strategy to set out the kinds and circumstances for different types of tenancies that should be provided to social rented housing tenants, including arrangements for fixed term tenancies, for registered providers which hold stock in the Dorset local authority area, to pay attention to when formulating their tenancy policies.
Towards a new model of day opportunities transformation	To consider the results of the consultation on the future of day services in Dorset and use this information to shape a way forward for these services. The consultation was launched on a set of proposals across Dorset arising from Cabinet's agreement in principle to the new	Karen Stephens – Head of Service, Commissioning - Working Age Adults & Disability Cllr Steve Robinson – Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	

	model for these services at its meeting on 10 September 2024.		
Partnership Principles and Statement of Reasonable Expectations with Town and Parish Councils	Approval of 1) a set of Partnership Principles with Community Partners and 2) a 'Statement of Reasonable Expectations' with Town and Parish Councils.	Jen Lowis – Head of Strategic Communications and Engagement Cllr Ryan Hope – Cabinet Member for Customer, Culture, and Community Engagement	

Meeting Date: 2 February 2026

Report Title	Aims and Objectives	Lead Officers / Members	Other Information

Meeting Date: 29 April 2026

Report Title	Aims and Objectives	Lead Officers / Members	Other Information

Unscheduled Committee Items

Report Title	Aims and Objectives	Lead Officers / Members	Other Information
Financial Provision for the Voluntary & Community Sector and Community Partnerships Strategy	The current 5 year financial agreement for the VCS will be coming to an end in October 2026. This paper will propose the new support for them.	Laura Cornette – Business Partner – Communities and Partnerships Cllr Ryan Hope – Cabinet Member for Customer, Culture, and Community Engagement	Consideration by Cabinet following the committee.
Place Based Partnership Prospectus	Feedback on the draft prospectus: a document that articulates the purpose, benefits and opportunities of the Place Based Partnership across health and social care.	Rachel Partridge – Deputy Director of Public Health & Prevention Cllr Steve Robinson – Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	

Informal Work of the Committee:

Date	Topic	Format	Members	Lead Officers / Members	Other Information

The Cabinet Forward Plan - September to December 2025

(Publication date – 11 AUGUST 2025)

Explanatory Note:

This Forward Plan contains future items to be considered by the Cabinet and Council. It is published 28 days before the next meeting of the Committee. The plan includes items for the meeting including key decisions. Each item shows if it is 'open' to the public or to be considered in a private part of the meeting.

Definition of Key Decisions

Key decisions are defined in Dorset Council's Constitution as decisions of the Cabinet which are likely to -

- a) to result in the relevant local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the relevant local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates (**Thresholds - £500k**); or
- b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the relevant local authority."

12 In determining the meaning of "*significant*" for these purposes the Council will have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State in accordance with section 9Q of the Local Government Act 2000 Act. Officers will consult with lead members to determine significance and sensitivity.

Cabinet Members and Portfolios 2024/25

Nick Ireland	Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding
Richard Biggs	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Property & Assets and Economic Growth
Jon Andrews	Place Services
Shane Bartlett	Planning and Emergency Planning
Simon Clifford	Finance & Capital Strategy
Ryan Hope	Customer, Culture and Community Engagement
Steve Robinson	Adult Social Care
Clare Sutton	Children's Services, Education & Skills
Gill Taylor	Health and Housing.
Ben Wilson	Corporate Development and Transformation

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
September					
Street Lighting Policy Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open Improvements in lighting technology mean more options are available for our LED replacement of streetlights. The new paper will seek agreement on the type of lighting to be used within our policy.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 9 Sep 2025	Place and Resources Overview Committee 13 Mar 2025	Cabinet Member for Place Services	<i>Jack Wiltshire, Corporate Director for Highways and Engineering</i> <i>jack.wiltshire@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)</i>
Period 4 financial management report Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To consider the Period 4 financial management report.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 9 Sep 2025		Cabinet Member for Finance & Capital Strategy	<i>Sean Cremer, Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial</i> <i>sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> , <i>Heather Lappin, Head of Strategic Finance</i> <i>heather.lappin@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i>
Dorset Safeguarding Children's Partnership (DSCP) Annual Report April 2024 - March 2025 Key Decision - No Public Access - Open This is the annual report for the activity completed by the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership April 2024 to March 2025.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 9 Sep 2025		Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Megan Cameron-Brown, Head of Quality Assurance and Partnerships</i> <i>megan.cameron-brown@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, People - Children (Paul Dempsey)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open Report relating to the making (adoption) of the neighbourhood plan following examination and referendum.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 9 Sep 2025		Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning	<i>Ed Gerry, Community Planning Manager</i> <i>ed.gerry@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)</i>
Dorset Council Property and Housing Repairs - Replacement of RMMSCW Framework Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To advise cabinet and seek approval for the approach to repairs, maintenance and small Capital works future.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 9 Sep 2025		Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Property & Assets and Economic Growth	<i>Julian Wain, Strategic Property Advisor</i> <i>Julian.wain@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Jessica Maskrey, Head of Service – Assets & Property</i> <i>jessica.maskrey@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)</i>
All-Age Pan-Dorset Appropriate Adult Service - contract extension approval Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To seek approval from Cabinet to extend Dorset Council's contract with the current provider for 6 months until 31 March 2026. This is necessary because the total contract value will now exceed £500k.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 9 Sep 2025		Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	<i>Tina Ironside, Strategic Commissioner</i> <i>tina.ironside@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
New Forest Mitigation Strategy Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To seek agreement to adopt the New Forest Mitigation Strategy and apply a tariff to qualifying development to help fund the Strategic Access, Management and Monitoring projects identified in the strategy, thereby allowing the Council to give planning permission in the east of the council area.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 9 Sep 2025		Cabinet Member for Place Services	<i>Hilary Jordan, Service Manager for Spatial Planning hilary.jordan@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)</i>
Additional Procurement Forward Plan Report - over £500k and Modern Slavery Transparency Statement Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open Additional Procurement Forward Plan Report – over £500k (key decision, 2025-2026) and Modern Slavery Transparency Statement 2024-2025 (statutory duty under Modern Slavery Act).	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 9 Sep 2025		Cabinet Member for Finance & Capital Strategy	<i>Sean Cremer, Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Richard Freed, Service Manager for Commercial and Procurement richard.freed@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Adoption of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Management Plan Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open Cabinet is asked to agree the final adoption of the revised Cranborne Chase National Landscape Management Plan, following its approval by the Partnership Board. The Council is part of the Partnership Board, and all the constituent local authorities need to approve its adoption. The management plan needs to be reviewed every five years.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 9 Sep 2025		Cabinet Member for Place Services	<i>Hilary Jordan, Service Manager for Spatial Planning</i> <i>hilary.jordan@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)</i>
Acquisition of land for SEND provision Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Fully exempt To approve the acquisition of land to accommodate the expansion of an SEND School, to meet current and future pupil numbers and to create other SEND related educational facilities.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 9 Sep 2025		Councillor Richard Biggs, Councillor Clare Sutton	<i>Jessica Maskrey, Head of Service – Assets & Property</i> <i>jessica.maskrey@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)</i>
October 2025					

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Parking Review Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Part exempt To review the parking provision across Dorset both on and off street, this will include review of car parks, resident parking, parking enforcement, avail permits and changing structures for the purpose of improving the parking operation.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 9 Oct 2025		Cabinet Member for Place Services	<i>Michael Westwood, Service Manager for Parking Services michael.westwood@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)</i>
Financial Provision for the Voluntary Community Sector Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open The current 5-year financial agreement for the VCS will be coming to an end in October 2026. This paper will propose the new support for them.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 9 Oct 2025	People and Health Overview Committee 15 Sep 2025	Cabinet Member for Customer, Culture and Community Engagement	<i>Laura Cornette, Business Partner - Communities and Partnerships Laura.cornette@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Jennifer Lewis, Head of Strategic Communications and Engagement jennifer.lewis@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028 Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open Dorset Council has a legal requirement to create a Domestic Abuse Strategy as set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. This was the second Strategy the Council had written such legislation came into place. The Strategy requires sign-off from the Council.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 9 Oct 2025	People and Health Overview Committee 15 Sep 2025	Cabinet Member for Health and Housing	<i>Andy Frost, Service Manager for Community Safety</i> andy.frost@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, <i>Ian Grant, Programme Coordinator</i> ian.grant@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk <i>Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>
Age Friendly Communities Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To provide an update on the Age Friendly Communities Programme.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 9 Oct 2025	Health and Wellbeing Board 24 Sep 2025 People and Health Overview Committee 15 Sep 2025	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	<i>Sam Poole, Interim Corporate Director for Commissioning & Improvement</i> samuel.poole@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk <i>Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>
Council Plan Progress Report Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open A bi-annual report to Cabinet on Council Plan delivery.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 9 Oct 2025		Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding	<i>Liz Crocker, Head of Strategy</i> liz.crocker@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk <i>Chief Executive</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Empty Homes Strategy Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open Part of the wider Housing Strategy, this report will introduce a strategy which sets out how the Council intends to bring long term empty properties back into use.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 9 Oct 2025	People and Health Overview Committee 15 Sep 2025	Cabinet Member for Health and Housing	Steven March, Team Leader Standards East steven.march@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)
Dorset Council - Farms Estates Strategy Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open Draft strategy for Cabinet consideration and approval following development and appraisal by the Farm Advisory Panel.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 9 Oct 2025		Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Property & Assets and Economic Growth	David Haynes, Senior Rural Estates Sueveyor david.haynes@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Jessica Maskrey, Head of Service – Assets & Property jessica.maskrey@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)
November					

Quarter 2 financial management report Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To consider the Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring Report 2024/25.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 11 Nov 2025		Cabinet Member for Finance & Capital Strategy	Sean Cremer, Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Heather Lappin, Head of Strategic Finance heather.lappin@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk
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Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and budget strategy Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To consider the Medium Term Financial (MTFP) and budget strategy.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 11 Nov 2025		Cabinet Member for Finance & Capital Strategy	<i>Sean Cremer, Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial</i> <i>sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Heather Lappin, Head of Strategic Finance</i> <i>heather.lappin@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i>
December					

Dorset Tenancy Strategy Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open Tenancy strategy to set out the kinds and circumstances for different types of tenancies that should be provided to social rented housing tenants, including arrangements for fixed term tenancies, for registered providers which hold stock in the Dorset local authority area, to pay attention to when formulating their tenancy policies.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 9 Dec 2025	People and Health Overview Committee 3 Nov 2025	Cabinet Member for Health and Housing	<i>Sharon Attwater, Service Manager for Housing Strategy and Performance</i> <i>sharon.attwater@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Andrew Billany, Corporate Director for Housing</i> <i>andrew.billany@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>
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Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Towards a new model of day opportunities transformation Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To consider the results of the consultation on the future of day services in Dorset and use this information to shape a way forward for these services. The consultation was launched on a set of proposals across Dorset arising from Cabinet's agreement in principle to the new model for these services at its meeting on 10 September 2024.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 9 Dec 2025	People and Health Overview Committee 3 Nov 2025	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	<i>Sarah Perrett, Commissioning Manager - Micro Provider & Voluntary Sector Development</i> sarah.perrett@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, <i>Mark Tyson, Corporate Director for Adult Commissioning & Improvement</i> mark.tyson@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk <i>Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>
Partnership Principles and Statement of Reasonable Expectations Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To approve a set of Partnership Principles with Community Partners and To approve a Statement of Reasonable Expectations with Town Councils	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 9 Dec 2025	People and Health Overview Committee TBC Place and Resources Overview Committee TBC	Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding	<i>Steven Ford, Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Sustainability</i> steven.ford@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, <i>Jennifer Lewis, Head of Strategic Communications and Engagement</i> jennifer.lewis@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk <i>Chief Executive</i>
February					

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Dorset Council Housing Allocation Policy Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open Proposed revisions to the councils Housing Allocations Policy, which governs how social housing is allocated to applicants on the housing register. The revised policy update aims to ensure fairness, transparency and compliance with legal requirements while addressing local housing need. Key changes may include amendments to priority criteria, eligibility requirements, changes to relevant legislation and operational procedures.	Decision Maker Dorset Council	Decision Date 10 Feb 2026	People and Health Overview Committee 3 Nov 2025 Cabinet 9 Dec 2025	Cabinet Member for Health and Housing	<i>Sarah How, Service Manager for Housing Solutions</i> sarah.how@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk <i>Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>
Quarter 3 financial management report Key Decision - No Public Access - Open Quarter 3 financial management report.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 27 Jan 2026		Cabinet Member for Finance & Capital Strategy	<i>Sean Cremer, Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial</i> sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, <i>Heather Lappin, Head of Strategic Finance</i> heather.lappin@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Medium Term Financial Plan and Budget Strategy report Key Decision - No Public Access - Open	Decision Maker Dorset Council	Decision Date 10 Feb 2026	Cabinet 27 Jan 2026 Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee 22 Jan 2026 People and Health Scrutiny Committee 23 Jan 2026	Cabinet Member for Finance & Capital Strategy	<i>Sean Cremer, Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil .gov.uk, Heather Lappin, Head of Strategic Finance heather.lappin@dorsetcoun cil.gov.uk</i>

Private/Exempt Items for Decision

Each item in the plan above marked as 'private' will refer to one of the following paragraphs.

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the shadow council proposes:-
 - (a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

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The Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE) Forward Plan September 2025 to January 2026 (Publication date – 14 AUGUST 2025)

Explanatory Note:

This Forward Plan contains future items to be considered by the Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence. It is published 28 days before the next meeting of the Committee. The plan includes items for the meeting including key decisions. Each item shows if it is 'open' to the public or to be considered in a private part of the meeting.

Definition of Key Decisions

Key decisions are defined in Dorset Council's Constitution as decisions which are likely to -

- a) to result in the relevant local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the relevant local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates (**Thresholds - £500k**); or
- b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the relevant local authority."

In determining the meaning of "*significant*" for these purposes the Council will have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State in accordance with section 9Q of the Local Government Act 2000 Act. Officers will consult with lead members to determine significance and sensitivity.

Committee Membership 2025/26

Cllr Nick Ireland – Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding

Cllr Richard Biggs – Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Property & Assets and Economic Growth

Cllr Ryan Hope – Cabinet Member for Customer, Culture and Community Engagement

Cllr Clare Sutton – Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education & Skills

Cllr Gill Taylor – Cabinet Member for Health and Housing

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Cabinet Member	Officer Contact
September 2025				

Dorset Council Delegated Decisions (if required) Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To note any decisions taken under delegation.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date 15 Sep 2025	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Executive Director, People - Children (Paul Dempsey)</i>
Dorset Council Commissioner's Report Key Decision - No Public Access - Part exempt To provide an overview of the current position in relation to delivery by the Dorset Centre of Excellence against the commissioning agreement.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date 15 Sep 2025	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Ross Bowell, Head of Service - Health, Education & SEND Commissioning ross.bowell@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, People - Children (Paul Dempsey)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Cabinet Member	Officer Contact
DCoE - Report of the Chair of the Board Key Decision - No Public Access - Part exempt To provide an update on the current situation at the Dorset Centre of Excellence and the Coombe House School, including progress made in relation to governance, leadership, staffing, estate, community use and finance.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date 15 Sep 2025	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Executive Director, People - Children</i> <i>(Paul Dempsey)</i>
December 2025				

Dorset Council Delegated Decisions (if required) Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To note any decisions taken under delegation.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date 1 Dec 2025	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Executive Director, People - Children</i> <i>(Paul Dempsey)</i>
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Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Cabinet Member	Officer Contact
Dorset Council Commissioner's Report Key Decision - No Public Access - Part exempt To provide an overview of the current position in relation to delivery by the Dorset Centre of Excellence against the commissioning agreement.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date 1 Dec 2025	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Ross Bowell, Head of Service - Health, Education & SEND Commissioning</i> ross.bowell@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk <i>Executive Director, People - Children (Paul Dempsey)</i>
DCoE - Report of the Chair of the Board Key Decision - No Public Access - Part exempt To provide an update on the current situation at the Dorset Centre of Excellence and the Coombe House School, including progress made in relation to governance, leadership, staffing, estate, community use and finance.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date 1 Dec 2025	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Executive Director, People - Children (Paul Dempsey)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Cabinet Member	Officer Contact
Annual Reports				
Review of Terms of Reference (June) Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To note the shareholder committee terms of reference.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date	Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding	<i>Grace Evans, Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer</i> <i>grace.evans@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i>
Annual Performance Report (December) Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To consider the Coombe House Annual Performance Report.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Executive Director, People - Children (Paul Dempsey)</i>

Private/Exempt Items for Decision

Each item in the plan above marked as 'private' will refer to one of the following paragraphs.

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the shadow council proposes:-
 - (a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.



Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd Forward Plan - October 2025 to January 2026 (Publication date – 4 SEPTEMBER 2025)

Explanatory Note:

This Forward Plan contains future items to be considered by the Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd. It is published 28 days before the next meeting of the Committee. The plan includes items for the meeting including key decisions. Each item shows if it is 'open' to the public or to be considered in a private part of the meeting.

Definition of Key Decisions

Key decisions are defined in Dorset Council's Constitution as decisions which are likely to -

- a) to result in the relevant local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the relevant local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates (**Thresholds - £500k**); or
- b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the relevant local authority."

In determining the meaning of "*significant*" for these purposes the Council will have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State in accordance with section 9Q of the Local Government Act 2000 Act. Officers will consult with lead members to determine significance and sensitivity.

Committee Membership 2025/26

Cllr Nick Ireland – Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding

Cllr Richard Biggs – Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Property & Assets, and Economic Growth

Cllr Steve Robinson – Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

Cllr Gill Taylor – Cabinet Member for Health and Housing

Cllr Ben Wilson – Cabinet Member for Corporate Development and Transformation

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Cabinet Member	Officer Contact
October 2025				

Dorset Council Delegated Decisions (as required) Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To note any decisions taken under delegation.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date 6 Oct 2025	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	<i>Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>
Dorset Council Organisational Update Key Decision - No Public Access - Part exempt To present the developments on the part of the Council relevant to Care Dorset.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date 6 Oct 2025	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	<i>Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>
Care Dorset Update Key Decision - No Public Access - Part exempt To provide an update for shareholder members on matters relating to Care Dorset.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date 6 Oct 2025	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	<i>Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Cabinet Member	Officer Contact
December 2025				

Dorset Council Delegated Decisions (as required) Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To note any decisions taken under delegation.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date 8 Dec 2025	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	<i>Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>
Dorset Council Organisational Update Key Decision - No Public Access - Part exempt To present the developments on the part of the Council relevant to Care Dorset.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date 8 Dec 2025	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	<i>Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>
Care Dorset Update Key Decision - No Public Access - Part exempt To provide an update for shareholder members on matters relating to Care Dorset.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date 8 Dec 2025	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	<i>Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Cabinet Member	Officer Contact
Annual Reports				
Care Dorset Annual Business Plan (March) Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Part exempt For the Shareholder Committee to consider progress in delivering the 5 year business plan, and any review of the plan as necessary.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date March	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	<i>Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>
Review of Terms of Reference (June) Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To note the shareholder committee terms of reference.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date June	Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding	<i>Grace Evans, Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer</i> <i>grace.evans@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i>
Care Dorset Annual Performance Report (June) Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To consider the Care Dorset Annual Performance Report.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date June	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	<i>Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Cabinet Member	Officer Contact
Annual report and Year end accounts (June) Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To receive the annual financial report.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date June	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	<i>Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>

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