**Housing services achieve national domestic abuse accreditation**

Sandwell Council's housing team's work on domestic abuse has been recognised with a national accreditation.

Sandwell is only the third council in the country to receive the recognition from the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA).

The DAHA accreditation follows a review of Sandwell’s policies and procedures, and after conducting case audits and interviews with employees and partners.

By achieving the DAHA accreditation, Sandwell has demonstrated its good practice and commitment to recognising and responding to domestic abuse and providing support to victims and their families.

A group of employees from across the council has been working towards the accreditation.

The group reviewed policies to ensure they reflected good practice, created a new guidance document for employees and rolled out a comprehensive training programme for all frontline housing staff.

The culmination of this work was a two-day onsite assessment visit from DAHA.

Gudrun Burnet, from DAHA, said: “We are delighted that Sandwell’s housing department achieved DAHA accreditation." DAHA acknowledged the hard work of staff developing the way they recognise and respond to domestic abuse, making a real difference to residents and staff.

Councillor Joanne Hadley, cabinet member for homes, said: “It's vital we make sure victims of domestic abuse living in Sandwell have the support they need.

“We are very proud of this accreditation and at the same time recognise that there is always room for improvement.

“Our officers were very committed to the preparation for the accreditation exercise and I am confident that we will maintain this momentum on this very important area of work in the future.”

Alan Caddick, director of housing and communities, said: “This is good news for the people of Sandwell. We are one of only a few local authorities in the country who have achieved this accreditation, so it is a significant achievement.”

If you’re experiencing domestic abuse and need help, call Black Country Women's Aid 0121 552 6448 or the free 24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline 0808 2000 247. In an emergency always call 999.