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# Domestic Abuse Policy

Policy

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## Domestic Abuse Policy



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**Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to reassure customers and colleagues that threats or acts of domestic abuse are taken seriously, and how we will respond to reports of such abuse affecting customers or members of their households.

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# 1. Introduction

Our vision is to create homes and places where people want to live. We are committed to ensuring that our neighbourhoods are safe places to live and recognise that we have an important role to play in tackling domestic abuse, raising awareness of domestic abuse, and supporting customers of domestic abuse.

We work closely with communities and are well placed to recognise the signs of domestic abuse. Our employees are in regular contact with our customers, either on the telephone, in our offices, in their homes, the community and are in a position where they are able to identify the signs of domestic abuse. Alternatively, a customer may make a disclosure that they are the survivor of domestic abuse, and our employees must be able to deal with that disclosure.

We believe that none of our customers should live in fear of domestic abuse or violence from a partner, former partner, or other member of their household.

We recognise that domestic abuse can happen to anyone and can occur in any household, and we will take steps to support any person suffering from or threatened with domestic abuse or violence.

This policy sets out our approach to dealing with domestic abuse and applies to all our customers. There is a separate policy that applies to our employees.

The aim of this policy is to

- To ensure that customers experiencing domestic abuse can approach us in confidence knowing that staff will be supportive and non-judgmental.
- To treat all disclosures of domestic abuse seriously and as a matter of high priority
- To ensure we have close working relationships with our partners and adopt a community coordinated response to domestic abuse.
- Outline our responsibilities and the support that is available to people who are experiencing domestic abuse.

# 2. Definitions

We have adopted the statutory definition of domestic abuse set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Domestic abuse is defined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 as follows.

(1) “Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if

- a. A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and
- b. The behaviour is abusive.

(2) Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following:

- a. Physical or sexual abuse
- b. Violent or threatening behaviour
- c. Controlling or coercive behaviour
- d. Economic abuse (see below)
- e. Psychological, emotional, or other abuse

And it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct (pattern of behaviour).

(3) “Economic abuse” means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B’s ability to

- a. Acquire, use, or maintain money or other property, or
- b. Obtain goods or services

For the purposes of this Part A’s behaviour may be behaviour “towards” B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B’s child)”

Personally Connected is defined in Section 2 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 as:

(1) “For the purposes of this Part, two people are “personally connected” to each other if any of the following applies

- a. they are, or have been, married to each other
- b. they are, or have been, civil partners of each other
- c. they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- d. they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- e. they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- f. they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child (see below); they are relatives.

(2) A person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if

- a. the person is a parent of the child, or
- b. the person has, or has had, parental responsibility for the child

(3) In this section

- “child” means a person under the age of 18 years
- “civil partnership agreement” has the meaning given by section 73 of the Civil Partnership Act 2004
- parental responsibility” has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989 (see section 3 of that Act)
- “relative” has the meaning given by section 63(1) of the Family Law Act 1996”

Examples of domestic abuse can include but are not limited to:

- Physical abuse - pushing, slapping, hitting, stabbing and attempted murder.
- Verbal abuse - name calling, humiliation, degradation, accusing, verbally threatening.
- Sexual violence - using force, threats, or intimidation to make a survivor perform sexual acts, rape and non-consensual acts of sex.
- Controlling behaviour - can involve a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the

means needed for independence, resistance, and escape, and regulating their everyday behaviour.

- Coercive behaviour – is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten a person.
- Economic abuse – controlling money and bank accounts, running up debts in a survivor’s name, allowing no say on how money is spent.
- Psychological and emotional abuse – creating isolation, excessively checking up on people and monitoring where–abouts – including the use of social media, using physical size to intimidate, humiliating and undermining behaviour, gaslighting, constantly criticising and putting them down, and blaming them for abuse.

We recognise that different kinds of abuse can happen in different contexts. The most prevalent type of domestic abuse occurs in relationships, however, the definition of domestic abuse also covers abuse between family members, such as child to parent or parent to child, we will consider these cases within the scope of this policy.

This policy also includes violence against women and girls, this includes serious crime types that are predominantly experienced by females, but not always.

- Stalking (domestic abuse and nondomestic abuse related stalking)
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- So called honour–based abuse
- Forced Marriage

We recognise that domestic abuse can affect anyone, regardless of age, disability, gender identity, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

We recognise there are also additional barriers to services experienced by customers from protected groups and those experiencing multiple disadvantages, such as co–occurrences of factors such as risk of homelessness, drug and alcohol use, criminal justice system involvement and mental health.

We recognise that our own staff may experience domestic abuse and are committed to supporting them in any way that we can. Please see separate domestic abuse staff policy.

### 3. Our Approach

#### Disclosure

We will take all disclosures of domestic abuse seriously. Domestic abuse is a serious crime, and we’ll always treat people experiencing domestic abuse in a sympathetic, supportive, and non–judgmental way.

Customers can disclose domestic abuse to us through any contact they have with us, for example, through our website, social media direct message, by telephone, by email, in person or in writing. We’ll provide interpreters and/or translate information into other languages or formats as needed.

We will respond within one working day, adopting a survivor and person–centered approach considering the needs of the customer and children in the household.

We recognise that customers will often find it extremely difficult to make a disclosure about domestic abuse, therefore where a disclosure of domestic abuse is made, it will be dealt with in a sensitive, non–judgmental, and supportive manner.

We will treat all disclosures of domestic abuse seriously and action them as high priority.

We employ staff who are trained to deal with domestic abuse, and as soon as a customer discloses domestic abuse to us, we’ll consider their situation and preferences, for example

we'll offer the option of disclosing to an employee of the same gender as the customer or via our partner agencies.

We'll agree the method of contact the customer wishes us to use when communicating with them. This includes talking to us over the phone, through an online video call, at our offices or another safe venue.

During the interview, we'll carry out a risk assessment using a Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence Risk Identification Checklist (DASH 2009 risk model), which is a UK wide accredited form used by us and partner organisations to plan how we'll support the customer and any children. If one of our partner agencies have carried out a recent DASH Risk assessment, we will not carry out another assessment.

At the interview we will also agree and base our support on the individual needs of the customer/children.

We recognise that not all people see themselves as victims or survivors, and therefore we'll make sure these labels are not associated with the customer disclosing to us.

Our Safeguarding lead will act as our organisations domestic abuse champion, providing support and guidance to customers, staff, and our stakeholders.

## Our Action

We take all disclosures of domestic abuse seriously, and where appropriate hold perpetrators of abuse to account including taking legal possession where applicable. We will be clear that domestic abuse is never the fault of the customer or their children.

Our approach is survivor-centered, and we'll consider their views and ongoing safety when deciding the most appropriate course of action. We'll make sure the customer is always aware of our response and that they agree any actions. This may include a referral for specialist support or additional security in their home, based on the risk of the customers circumstances.

We'll use the full range of remedies as appropriate, considering the needs of each individual involved in the case. We'll advise about possible courses of action, both to respond to the immediate situation and to deal with it longer term. We won't put any pressure to take legal action but will offer advice if it is something they wish to pursue. We'll provide relevant advice and help, including information about alternative housing, additional security measures in the home and suitable support from specialist organisations (Women's Aid, Local Refuge organisations etc.).

We recognise that housing is one of the main factors why customers don't leave abusive homes. If customers fear for their immediate safety, we'll work in partnership with relevant partners to ensure suitable measures are in place to support the customers safety.

If temporary or permanent re-housing is considered, we'll work with customers and relevant partners to identify areas that will minimise the risk of future abuse. We'll also continue to act against the perpetrator where appropriate and provide perpetrators with housing advice to ensure ongoing safety for customers. Any move for customer may not always be a like for like home, as this would depend on housing stock available at the time.

A significant number of adults or children who experience domestic abuse will also require safeguarding. Employees are trained to be aware of this and to make safeguarding referrals as needed to make sure people are protected.

We'll keep all cases involving domestic abuse under review until the customer is satisfied it's been resolved.

Whilst we are dealing with the case and after it's been resolved we'll provide support for customers, their families and witnesses to make sure they feel safe in their home and the community in which they live.

### Working in partnership

We work in collaboration with relevant agencies, utilising the whole housing approach framework when responding to incidents of domestic abuse. We'll take account of each person's circumstances and the different courses of action that may be possible and appropriate.

We keep an up-to-date list of a range of agencies which may be able to offer advice or support depending on the customers' circumstances.

We will maintain strong partnership working with local agencies and will share information through the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and Police. We'll continue to be an active member of the Community Safety Partnership and use that to influence strategic decision-making regarding support services available in the communities where customers live.

We'll refer customers to relevant agencies if they need any support relating to financial issues. We'll also signpost to organisations for legal advice as appropriate.

We'll work in partnership with appropriate agencies to support or signpost perpetrators of domestic abuse who recognise and want to change their behaviour.

We respect customers right to privacy and will act in line with our Data Protection Policy. We'll never force anyone to share any information they don't want to. When working with other organisations we may need to share some information about customers and their situation. We'll only share information with the customers permission, unless there is a risk to the safeguarding of children or a vulnerable adult, and it is a duty of care. In addition, agencies such as the police may request personal data about the customer as part of their information gathering. In these cases, we will assess the sharing of data on a case-by-case basis, in line with our Data Protection Policy.

### Awareness of domestic abuse

We'll widely publicise information to raise awareness about domestic abuse, telling customers how to get help if they need it and the type of response, they can expect from us.

We'll carry out a rolling programme of employee training to make sure domestic abuse is always at the forefront of our minds. Our employees are aware of how to act and report any concerns confidently and sensitively.

## 4. References

We have developed this policy in accordance with the changes in legislation and the social housing white paper to ensure that policies and procedures comply relevant legislation including (not exhaustive list):



- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2012
- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003
- Housing Acts 1985, 1996 2003, and 2004 (as amended)
- Children Act 1989
- Equality Act 2010
- The Care Act 2014
- Local Government Act 2000
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Modern Slavery Act 2015

Links to other strategies, policies and procedures

- Anti-Social Behaviour and Hate Crime Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Allocations and Lettings Policy
- Tenancy Policy
- Tenancy Fraud Policy
- Good Neighbourhood Management Policy
- Noise App Procedure
- Colleague Domestic Abuse Procedure

## 5. Exceptions

There may be certain circumstances under which the terms of this policy may be reconsidered. Colleagues should be mindful of customer vulnerabilities and their specific needs. Extenuating circumstances will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and exceptions may be applied that require empathy and flexibility, to ensure that customers are treated fairly, compassionately and with respect.

## 6. Appendices

[Appendix 1](#) contains a list of national domestic abuse support providers. Regional offices will hold a separate list of local support providers.

Appendix 1 – National Support Providers & Useful Contacts				
Name	Description	Website	Email	Phone number
Refuge – National Domestic Abuse Helpline	National Domestic Abuse helpline. Service can be contacted by telephone, online chat via their website or contact via their website form. Contact by phone is free, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Live chat available Monday to Friday 3pm to 10pm.	<a href="https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/en">https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/en</a>	Not available	0808 2000 247
Galop	If you identify as LGBT+ you can call Galop for emotional and practical support - supporting LGBT+ people who are victims of domestic abuse, sexual violence, hate crime, so-called conversion therapies, honour-based abuse, forced marriage, and other forms of abuse.	<a href="https://galop.org.uk/">https://galop.org.uk/</a>	<a href="mailto:help@galop.org.uk">help@galop.org.uk</a>	0800 999 5428
Respect – Mens advice line	Helpline for male victims of domestic abuse. Telephone support available Monday to Friday from 10am to 5pm.	<a href="https://mensadvice.org.uk/">https://mensadvice.org.uk/</a>	<a href="mailto:info@mensadvice.org.uk">info@mensadvice.org.uk</a>	0808 8010327
Bright Sky App	Bright Sky is a mobile app and website for anyone experiencing domestic abuse, or who is worried about someone else.  The app can be downloaded for free from the app stores. Only download the app if it is safe for you to do so and if you are sure that your phone isn't being monitored.	<a href="https://www.hestia.org/brightsky">https://www.hestia.org/brightsky</a>		
Womens Aid	Women's Aid is a national charity working to support domestic abuse against women and children.  Live chat available through their website operating 7 days per week between 10am and 6pm.	<a href="https://www.womensaid.org.uk/">https://www.womensaid.org.uk/</a>	<a href="mailto:helpline@womensaid.org.uk">helpline@womensaid.org.uk</a>	

	A list of local of local support services is available via their website.			
Ask ANI (Action Needed Immediately)	<p>If you are experiencing domestic abuse and need immediate help, ask for ANI (Action Needed Immediately) in participating pharmacies and Jobcentres.</p> <p>When you ask for ANI, you will be offered a private space, provided with a phone and asked if you need support from the police or other domestic abuse support services.</p> <p>To find your nearest participating provider, search using the postcode checker on the Ask for Ani page on the Enough website.</p>	<a href="https://enough.campaign.gov.uk/get-support/ask-for-ani">https://enough.campaign.gov.uk/get-support/ask-for-ani</a>		
Safe Spaces	<p>Ask for ANI is delivered in partnership with Safe Spaces, a safe and confidential room where victims can take some time to reflect, access information on specialist support services or call friends or family.</p> <p>Safe Spaces are also available in Boots, Morrisons, Superdrug and Well pharmacies, TSB banks and independent pharmacies across the UK.</p>	<a href="https://uksaysnomore.org/safespaces/">https://uksaysnomore.org/safespaces/</a>		
Karma Nirvana	<p>National Honour Based Abuse helpline.</p> <p>Service can be contacted by telephone Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm.</p>	<a href="https://karmanirvana.org.uk/">https://karmanirvana.org.uk/</a>		0800 5999 247