

HOUSING DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY 2021

HOUSING SERVICES

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Version Control

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Associated Documentation

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Housing Domestic Abuse Policy



DRAFT



1.0 Introduction

South Derbyshire District Council recognises that domestic abuse is a serious issue has significant human and financial consequences for individuals, families and communities.

Anyone can experience domestic abuse. Home Office research indicates that whilst most abuse is against women it also occurs in Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender relationships, in heterosexual relationships where men are abused by women and by grown up children against their parents.

Domestic abuse is very common. It can affect one in four women and one in six men in their lifetimes, regardless of age, social class, race, disability or lifestyle. It accounts for around 1 in 10 of all reported violent crimes. In any one year there are over 1.8 million separate incidents of physical violence or threats of violence against women from their partners or former partners. (Office of National Statistics 2016 year end data)

As a landlord and also the provider of homelessness, housing advice and housing allocations services the Council has a major role to play in both preventing domestic abuse and supporting its victims.

The Council has already identified in the Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021 that domestic abuse is a major cause of homelessness in the district.

This policy has been prepared in conformity with the Council's Corporate Equalities Policy Statement which sets out how the Council will meet the equality duties for public bodies in line with the Equality Act 2010.

2.0 AIMS OF THE DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

- 2.1 The Council believes that all forms of Domestic abuse are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Domestic abuse often has consequences for the housing of victims and their families who will frequently turn to Council Housing Services for help. This policy aims to ensure that all staff, partner agencies and contractors understand domestic abuse and give a consistent service when offering guidance and support.
- 2.2 The Government's wider aim is to support victims of domestic abuse and ensure that they and their families are provided with the stability and security they need and deserve. These aims are now underpinned within the Domestic Abuse Act 2020 and the associated guidance.
- 2.3 Housing Providers have also been specifically identified within the government's recent Social Housing White Paper as playing a key role in the delivery of Housing and support to the victims of domestic abuse. It is expected that the new Housing Regulator will expect all providers to have clear policies in this area of their work.
- 2.4 In order to address these wider aims the Council intends to



- Increase awareness and understanding of domestic abuse in the workplace and within communities
- Improve the safety and welfare of adults, children and families who are affected
- Encourage and maintain multi-agency working to ensure a seamless service to victims, survivors and their families
- Ensure that staff have regular training relevant to their roles

3.0 Multi Agency Working

- 3.1 The Act and the associated guidance has multi agency working at its heart and requires Derbyshire County Council (DCC) to create a Joint Partnership Board to facilitate the delivery of consistent and equitable services for victims of Domestic Abuse.
- 3.2 There are already strong partnership arrangements in place to deal with Domestic Abuse through:
- Monthly tasking meetings with the Derbyshire Policy held at Swadlincote Police station
 - Fortnightly Multi Agency Risk Conference (MARAC) meeting held at Police Headquarters in Ripley
 - Bi-Monthly South Derbyshire Domestic Abuse Action Group meetings. The meetings are attended by all local domestic abuse service providers, the DCC Lead officer for Domestic Abuse, Council Housing officers and the Council's Communities Team Manager.
 - Independent Domestic Violence Advisor provides support to high-risk victims.
 - DCC Domestic Violence Service provided by Derbyshire WISH Domestic Abuse Support Services until March 2023.
 - Lemon Grove refuge which is managed as part of the DCC contract (by Derbyshire WISH) and dispersed accommodation provided by both Derbyshire WISH and Trident Reach, through the New Horizons project, which is commissioned by the Council and funded through the Better Care Fund.
 - SV2 work with victims/survivors of sexual violence and abuse to inform, protect, support and empower them. This service is commissioned by NHS England, Derbyshire Police and DCC.
 - South Derbyshire Community Safety Partnership commission South Derbyshire CVS to deliver the Safer Homes Scheme. This scheme installs home security measures to improve the safety of victims of crime, including victims of Domestic Abuse.
- 3.3 The Council will actively participate in new and future partnership initiatives and acknowledges the guidance to the legislation which states, "Given the complex nature of domestic abuse, a multi-agency response is critical to identify victims and their families sooner before reaching crisis point. Multi-agency working enables professionals to get a better understanding of all the risks and needs of the victim, children and the perpetrator (and any other family members and linked individuals) and



enables professionals to work collaboratively to respond to these risks without waiting for the abuse to escalate.”

4.0 Definitions

- 4.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2020 defines Domestic Abuse between connected persons as:
- (a) physical or sexual abuse;
 - (b) violent or threatening behaviour;
 - (c) controlling or coercive behaviour;
 - (d) economic abuse;
 - (e) psychological, emotional or other abuse;
- 4.2 No distinction is made whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.
- 4.3 “Economic abuse” means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on the victims ability to:
- (a) acquire, use or maintain money or other property;
 - (b) obtain goods or services.
- For the purposes of this Act 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).
- 4.4 The Act defines people as being personally connected where:
- (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
 - (g) they are relatives.

5.0 The Role of Housing

5.1 Homelessness and Allocations Services

As a landlord and also the provider of homelessness, housing advice and allocations services the Council fulfils a wide range of roles to prevent domestic abuse support its victims and deal with perpetrators.

The Council will endeavour to meet the aims within the Domestic Abuse Act 2020 to support victims of domestic abuse in social housing:

- to leave their abusive situation help them build a new life for themselves and their families in safety and security;
- when they choose to stay in their home once the perpetrator has left;



- Remove the fear of victims losing their secure tenancies should they flee their homes by offering further lifetime- tenancies to lifetime social tenants;
- Improve access to social housing for victims of domestic abuse who are in refuges or other forms of safe temporary accommodation;
- Not to apply residency tests for those victims who have fled to another district;
- Support victims to remain safely in their homes if they choose to do so.

The Council will ensure that victims of domestic abuse that apply for accommodation are placed in Band A of the Housing Allocations Policy. Households made homeless by domestic violence will also be placed in Band A of the allocations policy for the initial fifty-six day “relief” period under the Homeless Reduction Act 2017. Households will then be placed in the Emergency rehousing band. Conversely, those who are either convicted or admit to perpetrating domestic abuse may be considered to have behaved ‘unacceptably’ under the Allocations Policy and deemed unsuitable for housing and therefore not eligible to join the Housing Register.

5.2 Temporary Accommodation

A range of temporary accommodation options are already provided by the Council either through its own housing stock or on the Council’s behalf by other providers funded through Government Grant or the Better Care Fund. Wherever Possible the Council will continue to support these schemes and also actively pursue additional resources to support the delivery of additional services.

The Council will support the aims of the legislation by working with DCC and the multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children within refuges and other safe accommodation, helping to end to the postcode lottery of finding suitable temporary accommodation and support.

The definition of safe accommodation includes:

- refuge accommodation;
- specialist safe accommodation;
- dispersed accommodation;
- sanctuary schemes;
- move-on or second stage accommodation.

It may still be necessary to place households fleeing violence in Bed and Breakfast accommodation in extreme emergencies. Where this is unavoidable, the Council will endeavour to minimise the time spent in this type of accommodation.

The Council will work with the agencies with statutory responsibilities to provide Domestic abuse support which includes:

- Advocacy support – development of personal safety plans, liaison with other services (for example, GPs and social workers, welfare benefit providers);



- Domestic abuse-prevention advice – support to assist victims to recognise the signs of abusive relationships, to help them remain safe (including online) and to prevent re-victimisation;
- Specialist support for victims with protected characteristics and / or complex needs, for example, interpreters, faith services, mental health advice and support, drug and alcohol advice and support and immigration advice;
- Children’s support – including play therapy and child advocacy;
- Housing-related support – providing housing-related advice and support, for example, securing a permanent home and advice on how to live safely and independently; and
- Counselling and therapy for both adults and children.

5.3 Tenancy agreement

The Council makes it explicit in the conditions of tenancy that domestic abuse will not be tolerated and states that tenants or their family and visitors must not:

“Cause or behave in such a way as is likely to cause, harassment, alarm, distress, a nuisance, an annoyance, or disturbance to anyone in South Derbyshire, including people in the locality of your property and other tenants or residents, either directly or indirectly. This includes but is not limited to any direct or indirect communication by letter, telephone, text message, email or social media (such as Facebook or Twitter). Cause or behave in such a way as is likely to cause harassment, alarm, distress, a nuisance, annoyance, or disturbance to anyone in South Derbyshire, including people in the locality of your property, because of colour, race, ethnic origin, sexuality, disability, health, age, religion, culture, immigration status, gender, or for any other reason.

Engage in conduct which is detrimental to vulnerable individuals or groups of individuals including, but not limited to, the elderly, those with physical or mental health disabilities, or children.

Where there is sufficient evidence then the Council will pursue possession proceedings against the perpetrator of such behaviour

6.0 Service Commitments

6.1 The Council will:

- Pledge its commitment to take claims of domestic abuse seriously;
- Train all staff on domestic abuse and its implications;
- Raise awareness of issues surrounding Domestic Abuse and support services available to victims both within the organisation and to our customers;
- Ensure those affected by domestic abuse are provided with support and protection, including temporary accommodation if it is appropriate;
- Refer victims to other Council teams who are able to work with partners to manage the safety and accommodation needs of the victim;
- Recognise that children living in households where domestic abuse is occurring are at risk and refer cases involving child protection or vulnerable adults to the relevant services;



- Work with Partners to ensure the best outcome for those suffering domestic abuse;
- Keep accurate and up-to-date records;
- Provide a supportive and enabling environment, which encourages people to report domestic abuse;
- Hold perpetrators accountable for their actions and take action against them where we have the power to do so, which may include taking injunctive action.

Confidentiality

The Council will not divulge information, without the consent of the person experiencing domestic abuse, unless required to do so by law or unless the information is necessary to protect a vulnerable adult or child.

Service Provision

Victims and Survivors of Domestic abuse can expect:

- To speak to a member of staff in a private and safe environment;
- A signer or interpreter to be present if appropriate;
- Support from a staff member of the same sex if required;
- To be listened to and allowed to make their own decisions;
- Signposting to an appropriate Domestic Abuse support service if this is required;
- Help to improve security at home or assistance with moving.

7.0 Reporting Monitoring and Review

Monthly Police statistics are received and reviewed by the Communities Team Manager. These statistics include the number of domestic related incidents. Any noticeable increase will be discussed with Police and other partners at the Bi-monthly Domestic Abuse Action Group meetings.

These statistics are also reviewed at the Quarterly South Derbyshire Community Safety Partnership Strategic group meetings.

Update reports are provided by all local services at the Bi-Monthly Domestic Abuse Action Group. Any issues or gaps in service provision are discussed and actions are identified to address them.

The South Derbyshire Homeless Forum will review activities regarding Homelessness and Domestic Violence as part of its new role to review the delivery of the Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy.



8.0 Further Information & Support Services

Further information and support can be obtained by contacting the local and national services below:

Derbyshire Domestic Abuse helpline

Tel: 08000 198 668 / Text for deaf or hearing impaired: 07534 617252.

Emergency SMS - text: 999.

Email: derbyshiredahelpline@theelmfoundation.org.uk

Website: <https://www.theelmfoundation.org.uk/>

National Domestic Violence Helpline (Run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge)

Tel: 0808 2000 247 (24 hours)

Email: helpline@refuge.org.uk / helpline@womensaid.org.uk.

Website: <http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk/>

National Men's Advice Line Tel: 0808 801 0327

Email: info@mensadvice.org.uk Website: www.mensadvice.org.uk

SV2 Support for victims of sexual violence

Advice Line: 01773 746 115 - option 1 (7 days a week 8am to 5pm)

Therapy Line: 01773 746 115 - option 2 (5 days a week 9am to 4pm)

Email: help@sv2.org.uk (weekdays 8am to 5pm)

<https://www.sv2.org.uk/>

Mankind Initiative Tel: 01823 334 244

Email: admin@mankind.org.uk

Website: new.mankind.org.uk

Derbyshire Victim Services

Support line: 0800 612 6505 / Text "COREDVS" to 82228

Email support@derbyshirecore.org

Website: <http://derbyshirevictimservices.co.uk/>

ChildLine, Tel: 0800 1111 / <https://www.childline.org.uk/>

NSPCC Helpline Tel: 0808 800 5000

Karma Nirvana Honour Base Abuse

Helpline Tel: 0800 5999 247

Website: www.karmanirvana.org.uk

Force Marriage unit

Email: fm@fco.gov.uk

Telephone: 020 7008 0151

Samaritans Tel: 116 123

Email: jo@samaritans.org

Website: <https://www.samaritans.org/>

