

Domestic Abuse Policy

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Other related documents	ASB policy and procedures Management Move procedure Safeguarding policy and procedures Allocations policy and procedures Equality policy GDPR policy Complaints policy



1. Policy statement

Our purpose is to give residents a firm foundation on which to build their lives. Our vision is a safe, comfortable and affordable home for every household. As before, this policy sets out our responsibilities to support residents who are the victims and survivors of domestic abuse.

Our role when receiving a report of domestic abuse is to offer support within the scope of our role as a housing provider. When supporting victims or survivors of domestic abuse we act with compassion and ensure our response is impartial, proportionate and that we provide information about the role of other services.

The outcome we seek through our work with statutory agencies is to prevent and protect residents from domestic abuse.

All colleagues, including contractors and board members, have a responsibility to those who are the victims of domestic abuse. Any concern or suspicion of abuse should trigger a response in every case.

Survivors against domestic abuse (SADA)

As part of this policy review, we gained feedback from an organisation we partner with, SADA. SADA were supportive of the policy and the commitments we have made. They made three recommendations to increase its effectiveness:

- more information on safeguarding vulnerable individuals
- the link between deprivation and domestic abuse
- the use of surveys to capture the voice of the survivor.

As a result of this feedback, increased reference to safeguarding vulnerable individuals has been made within the policy. Under objectives and actions, we have included a specific point on deprivation. Under policy actions a point has been included about using survey feedback.

An equality impact assessment has been completed as part of this policy review.

2. Current Position

For the last financial year (2022-23) we received 44 reports of domestic abuse. SADA audited a third of these cases and overall, the feedback was positive with colleagues recording good case notes and ensuring that victims are supported and referred to specialist agencies.

We have three colleagues who have received specialist training to attend MARAC meetings. This is to ensure victims are supported and information shared; ensuring our case management is effective.

Our Director of Housing sits on the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Board. This partnership is made of local key organisations and seeks to work together to keep adults, children and

families safe from abuse.

We have increased our internal resource to 12 neighbourhood partners and 6 tenancy support partners, which will allow us to support more victims and survivors, and through increased contact, identify more cases of domestic abuse. Alongside this, we have invested time and resources into:

- enhanced training for colleagues to attend the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC); ensuring we are always represented and acting in the best interests of the residents we are supporting
- the SADA service through funding to support their ongoing work
- strong partnerships including with SADA, the Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy Service (IDVA), Adult and Child Social Services and local policing teams.

3. Key Principles

- helping support victims and survivors to live in a comfortable and safe home
- offer a clear, accessible and safe environment for victims to contact us - including safe spaces where appropriate
- ensure a victim or survivor is comfortable with the actions we take
- work in partnership to ensure victims receive specialist support
- apply learning from casework and reviews to improve the service.

4. Objectives

- to act in line with key legislation relating to domestic abuse and meet the obligations of the regulatory consumer standards
- case management monitored regularly through operational performance indicators
- provide tailored support to residents when they need it, either directly from us or from one of our partner agencies
- take appropriate action against perpetrators where it is proportionate and our responsibility to do so; support our partner agencies to do the same
- to safeguard victims of domestic abuse through joint working with partner agencies
- identify and support those at risk of domestic abuse with a focus on areas with higher deprivation levels.

5. Policy Actions

The policy actions will be included as objectives in the directorate plan until the next policy review:

- all front-line housing colleagues trained and supported to respond to reports of domestic abuse. MARAC training for neighbourhood, tenancy support and community safety partners
- increased perpetrator support programmes to reduce the reoccurrence

of domestic abuse

- raised awareness through increased and targeted communication
- use survey feedback from victims, survivors and SADA case audits to improve the service
- increased support offered to victims who have been identified in areas with higher levels of deprivation – utilising our data to identify at risk residents
- increased referrals made to partner agencies
- increased support for colleagues who manage cases of domestic abuse, including the telephone counselling service and mental health first aiders.

6. Desired Outcomes

- victims feel safe and comfortable reporting domestic abuse – achieved through trained colleagues, effective case management and a multi-agency approach
- colleagues feel supported and capable in managing reports of domestic abuse
- victims and survivors are supported through increased contact and use of data
- partner agencies support residents for their areas of responsibility
- service improvements identified as a result of feedback received.

7. Performance Indicators

- increased total number of colleagues who have completed MARAC training
- quarterly feedback from SADA auditing which is used to demonstrate best practice and identify areas for improvement
- Increased satisfaction from residents with the support provided
- 100% of cases:
 - have an initial contact within 1 working day of receiving disclosure of domestic abuse
 - demonstrate evidence of the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence (DASH) assessment being attempted with the victim and recorded on the case management system
 - where contact is made with victims at least fortnightly, unless expressly agreed with the victim otherwise.
 - where consent is given, are offered a referral to external specialist support such as SADA and IDVA services.

8. Key Legislation

- The Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Family Law Act 1996
- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Data Protection Act 1998 and General Data Protection Policy

- The Housing Act 1996
- The Equality Act 2010
- Neighbourhood and Community Consumer Standard.

9. Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years or earlier if required.