

# Domestic Abuse Policy

In this policy, 'Flagship Group/ ('we') includes Flagship Homes and the housing associations trading as Newtide Homes, Samphire Homes, and Victory Homes.

This policy outlines our approach to supporting victims/survivors of domestic abuse.

<b>Department</b>	Housing
<b>Policy Owner</b>	Housing Managing Directors
<b>Approved Date</b>	<b>November 2024</b>
<b>Date for Review</b>	<b>November 2027</b>
<b>Approving Body</b>	<i>Customer Committee</i>
<b>Equality Impact Assessment Date</b>	24 June 2024
<b>Version Number</b>	1.2

## Introduction

We are committed to tackling domestic abuse in our homes and communities and will support our tenants and household members who are affected by this to feel safer in their homes and access suitable support.

We acknowledge the gendered nature of domestic abuse (as reported through Home Office statistics) and stand against violence against women and girls “VAWG” in all forms including harassment, stalking, honour-based abuse, and coercive control. We will support the Police in their aim to eradicate VAWG related crimes.

We also recognise that men experience domestic abuse, and that individuals who are LGBTQIA+, disabled, minoritised ethnicities, and/or other marginalised groups may have increased risks of experiencing domestic abuse, requiring support tailored to their intersectional needs.

You can expect our staff to be trained to spot the signs of domestic abuse and to take a believing and non-judgmental approach when domestic abuse is identified or disclosed to us.

We are committed to embedding a culture of standing against domestic abuse in our organisation and a supportive workplace for staff. Our approach and commitments to staff experiencing domestic abuse are set out in our staff safeguarding and wellbeing procedure.

We will raise awareness of domestic abuse through training, resources, and campaigns.

## Definitions

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 sets out a full definition of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse can be defined as:

Abusive behaviour by a person towards another person if they are aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other. Personally connected includes marriage, civil partnership, intimate relationship, or relatives (for example child to parent abuse). This personal connection does not have to be ongoing - domestic abuse can occur even if the relationship has ended.

The following are types of domestic abuse together with some examples of how this might take place:

- **Physical abuse** – hitting, strangling/choking or pushing.
- **Sexual abuse** – rape or sexual assault, withholding access to contraception.
- **Violent or threatening behaviour** – damaging the home or your property, hurting pets.
- **Controlling or coercive behaviour** – limiting choices, controlling your phone or social media, questioning movements or actions.
- **Stalking and harassment** – following you, repeated calls and messages, turning up at work or sending gifts.
- **Economic abuse** – controlling finances and access to money, accruing debt in your name.
- **Psychological and emotional abuse** – putting you down, using derogatory names or language, using children or family members against you.

- **So called honour-based abuse** – female genital mutilation (partial or full removal or injury to female genital organs for non-medical reasons) or forced marriage.
- **Tech or social media abuse** – accessing social media accounts, sharing explicit images online, tracking your movements via location apps.

It does not matter whether the behaviour is a single incident or a course of conduct.

Further information about domestic abuse and signs you could be experiencing this can be found on our website.

The Domestic Abuse Act recognises children as victims of domestic abuse for example if they see, hear, or experience the effects of abuse. Through our work we will always consider children and take appropriate steps to safeguard them.

Individuals experiencing or at risk of domestic abuse are referred to as victims or survivors. The person causing the abuse is called a perpetrator.

### Identifying domestic abuse

You can tell us you are experiencing domestic abuse in a variety of ways including through our websites, live chat or speaking to a member of staff. This is called making a disclosure. We will treat disclosures sensitively and with utmost confidentiality. We will never tell the perpetrator what you have told us even where there is a joint tenancy.

All staff will receive training on how to spot the signs of domestic abuse and respond to a disclosure. We recognise our privileged position in housing, and we can identify signs of domestic abuse through our interactions such as where there are rent arrears, damage to the home or reports of anti-social behaviour.

Staff who identify domestic abuse or receive a disclosure will raise this as a safeguarding concern so that an appropriately trained member of staff can be allocated to support you. Again, this concern is recorded in a confidential way.

### Responding to domestic abuse

We have a specialist domestic abuse team who are here to help you. You can access this service by request or through signposting by another member of staff in our organisation or another organisation. Our domestic abuse team will work closely with you throughout your journey.

Below are some of the steps we can take to help you feel safer:

- If you move into one of our homes having left an abusive relationship, we will discuss what support you need and ensure you have access to this.
- Open a domestic abuse case which will be stored securely on our system, separately from your general tenancy records.
- Complete a domestic abuse risk assessment with you.

- Provide information about and make referrals to suitable support agencies who will be able provide ongoing domestic abuse support to you. We will also provide information about where you can find support for your children.
- Arrange for your home to be made more secure for example by changing the locks, adding bolts, chains, letterbox guards or additional lighting.
- Complete a safety plan with you in case you need to leave your home in a hurry.
- Provide a single point of contact who can work with you and our wider housing teams for example if there are rent arrears or you wish to move.
- Signpost you to sources of information and advice if you hold a joint tenancy with the perpetrator.
- If you need to leave your home (known as “fleeing”), you will receive priority need for alternative housing from the local authority. We will provide information and advice about how you can move including in an emergency. We will stay in contact through this process until suitable accommodation has been found for you.

There is no limit to the number of times you can access our domestic abuse service even if you have resumed a relationship with the same perpetrator. We will always be led by you and will only make contact in a way we have agreed is safe for you. We will never discuss your case with the perpetrator.

We will understand your needs as an individual including any protected characteristics and whether you belong to a minoritised group. We will ensure suitable support referrals are made according to your circumstances and we are able to offer a variety of communication and reasonable adjustments should you need these.

Before your case is closed you will be asked if you would like to provide feedback which we will use to help shape our service for others.

### **Partnership working**

We will have a good understanding of support services in the area you live which are suitable for your needs and the risks involved in your case. We will hold good relationships with those services and work in a joined-up way to support you.

We will also work with other agencies such as the Police, Local Authorities and Social Services to ensure you are receiving a coordinated response. We understand it can feel overwhelming to work with multiple organisations and our staff will help you navigate this.

We have information sharing agreements in place so other organisations can tell us if they are working with one of our tenants who may need housing related domestic abuse support.

### **Perpetrators**

We do not tolerate domestic abuse in our homes, and we can hold perpetrators to account in a number of ways (we will always be led by victims/survivors):

- When moving into one of our homes you will be asked to sign a tenancy agreement which makes it clear that do not tolerate domestic abuse and consider this to be a breach of tenancy.
- We can signpost to services who can help put legal orders in place against perpetrators such as non-molestation or occupation orders.
- We can consider using our powers under the Anti-social Behaviour (Crime and Policing) Act 2014 for example by applying for an injunction against a perpetrator.
- We can help you report domestic abuse to the Police who will be able to investigate and take action against perpetrators.
- We can provide information about how you can apply for a “Clare’s Law” disclosure if you are concerned that the person you are in a relationship with has been a perpetrator of domestic abuse.
- Where it is safe and perpetrators are open to this, we can signpost them to support and rehabilitation services and programmes.

### Training statement

All customer facing staff will be made aware of this policy and receive safeguarding and domestic abuse training appropriate for their role.

Staff in our housing teams will receive enhanced domestic abuse training and our domestic abuse team will be trained to complete domestic abuse risk assessments.

### Measuring Effectiveness

The effectiveness of this policy will be measured in the following ways:

- Number of domestic abuse safeguarding concerns reported and domestic abuse cases.
- Feedback from domestic abuse and safeguarding agencies.
- Customer feedback and satisfaction

### EIA statement

An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken for this policy on 24 June 2024. It identified a number of positive impacts and any negative impacts have been mitigated.

### Review Period

This policy will be reviewed at least every three years or sooner to reflect changes in legislation or local area practice for example themes identified through domestic homicide reviews.