

Draft Domestic Abuse Housing Policy - Summary

Introduction

Dartford Borough Council's Housing Service has developed a new draft Domestic Abuse Housing Policy.

The Domestic Abuse Housing Policy sets out the Housing Services' responsibilities and response to tackling domestic abuse and the support available to victims and survivors.

Dartford Borough Council ('the Council') believes that no one should live in fear of violence and abuse and is committed to reducing crime and disorder including violence against women and girls.

Aims and Objectives

The Policy includes several aims and objectives. To view the full list of aims and objectives, please refer to [section 2 of the Policy](#).

What is Domestic Abuse?

Section 1 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 provides the following statutory definition of domestic abuse:

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.

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;
- (e) psychological, emotional or other abuse;

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

To view the full definition of domestic abuse, please refer to [section 3 of the Policy](#).

Strategic Context

A full list of legislation, regulation and statutory guidance the Policy will comply with is set out in [section 4 of the Policy](#). This section also contains a full list of regional strategies, protocols and guidance, and Council strategies, policies and procedures that the Policy will be compatible with.

Information about the Policy intending to meet the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation and the Regulator of Social Housing's Neighbourhood and Community Standard is also set out in this section.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Housing Service

The Policy sets out the roles and responsibilities of the various teams within the Housing Service and how they can offer assistance and support to victims of domestic abuse.

- **Housing Solutions Team** - Deliver homelessness advice and assistance, including where homelessness is a result of being a victim of domestic abuse.
- **Tenancy Services Team** - Support tenants who are victims of domestic abuse, promoting their safety. Where the tenant is a perpetrator of domestic abuse, there are measures available through, for example, enforcement of the tenancy agreement.
- **Housing Scheme and Finance Team** – Assist in dealing with the initial stages of reports of domestic abuse. The Team will signpost victims to agencies who provide support or to the Housing Solutions Team for further action. The Tenancy Services Team will take the lead in managing cases that require further intervention.
- **Housing Maintenance Team** – Carry out repairs and maintenance to Council homes, including installing security measures for victims of domestic abuse under the Council's Sanctuary Scheme.

This is set out in **section 5 of the Policy**.

Partnership Working

The Council engages with a range of agencies to provide effective support and protection to victims and survivors of domestic abuse and to ensure there is a coordinated response. A list of the partnerships the Council is part of is set out in full in **section 6 of the Policy**.

Responding to reports of Domestic Abuse

Section 7 of the Policy explains that the reporting of domestic abuse to the Council's Housing Service can be made in different ways, including in person, in writing, by telephone, online, via a third party such as the Police and through the Council's Domestic abuse One Stop Shop (as covered in section 6.2 of the Policy).

There may also be occasions where disclosure is not given by the victim themselves but by someone else or there are signs that domestic abuse may be happening. This could be for example, through noticing a pattern of frequent visible injuries or through hearsay evidence. It could also be raised via the Maintenance Concern Card Procedure for repairs and maintenance contractors visiting Council properties, and through the identification and pattern of numerous repairs such as: external door lock changes, bathroom lock changes, broken windows, lost keys or damage to internal doors.

This section includes information on specialist support for victims and survivors of domestic abuse and details how the Housing Service can assist. It also includes information on the Housing Service's Complex Case Panel (7.4.1), the Council's

Sanctuary Scheme (7.4.2) and the Sanctuary Access for Eligible Residents (SAFER) Scheme, which is run by Kent County Council (KCC) (7.4.3).

The section includes information on ending a Council tenancy should a victim or perpetrator wish to; however, the Council would advise tenants against ending a tenancy without first seeking independent legal advice and securing suitable and safe alternative accommodation (7.4.4).

Where perpetrators of domestic abuse are Council tenants, consideration will be given to appropriate action towards the perpetrator. This may include signposting perpetrators to support to change their behaviour (7.5.2) or enforcing the tenancy or lease agreement (7.5.3 and 7.5.4).

Training

Staff need to be confident and knowledgeable so they can identify the signs and appropriately respond to reports of domestic abuse. More details on the training provided to staff can be found in **section 8 of the Policy**.

Publicity and Awareness

The Council is committed to raising awareness of domestic abuse and ensuring that residents, communities and partner agencies are clear on the services the Council can provide to support victims and survivors.

The Council will publicise information on accessing support available through the following channels:

- A dedicated domestic abuse page on the website - <https://www.dartford.gov.uk/domestic-violence/domestic-violence-help/3>
- Publishing this policy on the website - <https://www.dartford.gov.uk/housing-policy/housing-strategy-policy-documents>
- Social media, including the annual 16 Days of Action campaign (#SeeKnowSpeakOut)
- The tenant and leaseholder newsletter 'The Link'

Record Keeping

Information on how the Council maintains accurate records of domestic abuse cases is set out in **section 10 of the Policy**.

Information on complaints, data protection, equality and diversity and how the Policy will be monitored and reviewed can be found in sections 11-14 of the Policy.

Key contact information is set out in Appendix A of the Policy.