



# **DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY**

## **AIM OF THE DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY**

Derby Homes' believes that Domestic abuse is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

Domestic abuse often has consequences for the housing situation of those affected and victims will frequently turn to their landlords for help.

This policy aims to ensure that all staff understand domestic abuse and give a consistent service when offering guidance and support.

The Policy is also for employees who may be suffering domestic abuse.

Derby Homes aims to:

- Increase awareness and understanding of domestic abuse in the workplace and within Derby's communities
- Improve the safety and welfare of adults and children who are affected
- Improve Derby Homes' response to domestic abuse
- Encourage and maintain multi-agency working to ensure a seamless service to victims, survivors and their children
- Ensure that staff have regular training relevant to their roles
- Update processes to fall in line with any new legislation
- Monitor and review Domestic abuse cases to ensure good practice is followed and positive outcomes are achieved.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Domestic abuse is a serious social and criminal problem that has significant human and financial consequences for individuals, families and communities.

The Home Office defines domestic abuse as:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional.

Controlling behaviour is: 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 their victim.

This definition includes so called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

The definition has been widened by the Government to incorporate violence by family members as well as between adults who are or were intimate partners. It should also be noted that this could include a vulnerable person, adult or child, who is living in an environment where they are witnessing abuse.

The Government is also explicit in including forced marriages and so called 'honour based violence' in this definition.

Domestic abuse includes but is not limited to:

- Physical violence – slapping, pushing, kicking, stabbing, damage to property or items of sentimental value, attempted murder or murder
- Sexual violence – any non-consensual sexual activity including: rape, sexual assault, coercive sexual activity or refusing safe sex
- Restricting freedom – controlling who a person sees or where they go, what they wear and do, stalking, imprisonment or forced marriage
- Emotional /psychological abuse –intimidation, social isolation, verbal abuse, humiliation, constant criticism or enforced trivial routines
- Economic abuse – stealing, depriving or taking control of money, running up debts, withholding benefits books or bank cards.
- Female Genital Mutilation – also referred to as 'cutting' or 'female circumcision'.

Anyone can experience domestic abuse. Home Office research indicates that whilst the majority of 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.

This policy complies with Derby Homes Equality and Diversity Policy which sets out Derby Homes commitment to recognising diversity and providing services that take account of these issues.

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. (ONS 2016 year end data)

## **DOMESTIC ABUSE AND THE LAW**

The 1998 Crime and Disorder Act (section 17) imposed a duty on local authorities and the Police to prevent crime and disorder in its areas. As a

result, each local authority area has an inter-agency Crime and Reduction Partnership.

The Derby City Council Domestic & Sexual Violence Team are part of Adult Safeguarding within the authority and work closely with partners including Derbyshire Constabulary to develop a co-ordinated, consistent and high quality service to victims of domestic abuse. The manager and head of service covering this area of work assist in developing and delivering the City/County wide Domestic and Sexual Violence strategy and action plan; also playing a central role in the Governance structure, ensuring there is a facility for local issues to be raised with senior representatives from a range of organisations and agencies.

Derby Homes has established a partnership with the team and other relevant agencies and will investigate high risk cases through the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). This process assists victims of domestic abuse to stay safe and make positive changes for themselves and their children.

Domestic abuse is included in overall strategies to reduce crime.

Victims of domestic abuse have recourse to criminal law and also civil law. Although there is no specific criminal offence for domestic abuse, many forms are a crime: harassment, assault, criminal damage, attempted murder, rape and false imprisonment. Not all domestic abuse is criminal however, but there is recourse through civil law: injunctions and non-molestation orders, for example.

## Derby Homes Policy on Domestic Abuse

Derby Homes will:

- Pledge its commitment to take claims of domestic abuse seriously
- Train all staff on domestic abuse and its implications
- Ensure those affected by domestic abuse are provided with support and protection, including temporary accommodation if it's appropriate
- Recognise that children living in households where domestic abuse is occurring are at risk & refer cases involving child protection or vulnerable adults to the relevant services in line with Derby Homes referral procedures
- 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
- Not tolerate domestic abuse by employees
- Be sensitive to gender, cultural and religious issues
- Respect the person's choices

- Put the person and their children's safety first and ensure confidentiality
- Explore possible options for survivors of domestic abuse, such as added security to their homes if they wish to stay, or rehousing if they do not
- Provide support for staff who work with people experiencing domestic abuse
- Ensure appropriate support is put in place for those victims who are identified as being at high risk of serious harm or homicide by using the **SafeLives (formerly CAADA)** DASH risk assessment form and making referrals into the MARAC (multi agency risk assessment conference) process where necessary.

## **Confidentiality**

Derby Homes 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.

## **Partnerships**

Domestic abuse is very complex. People involved may have disabilities, mental health problems, drug and alcohol dependency or special needs. It is essential to work with other agencies who have the necessary expertise.

Through collaborative working with **Derby Domestic and Sexual Abuse Action Group (DSAAG)** we are updated on new legislation and have the opportunity to influence the delivery of the City's strategic plan.

## **Service Provision**

### **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 or ethnic origin if required
- Support from a specialist Domestic Abuse Support Officer (CNP) or **Derby Homes' Complex Needs Officer (Domestic Abuse)** if appropriate
- 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.

## **Domestic Abuse and Housing**

Derby City Council supports victims of domestic abuse by awarding priority for rehousing through the Allocations Policy rather than treating as homeless. Conversely, those who perpetrate Domestic abuse may be considered to have behaved 'unacceptably' and deemed unsuitable for housing.

## **The Tenancy Agreement**

Derby Homes makes it explicit in the conditions of tenancy that domestic abuse will not be tolerated:- 'You or anyone living with you at/or visiting your home, must not inflict violence or threaten violence against, any other person, either living with you or in another Council home. You must not harass or use physical, mental, emotional or sexual abuse against anyone residing in, visiting or otherwise engaged in lawful activity within the locality.'

## **Domestic Abuse and the Workplace**

Employees confiding to another member of staff that they are suffering from domestic abuse can expect:

- A safe environment to discuss their issues
- Confidentiality, unless a vulnerable child or adult is at risk
- Support
- Safety and security whilst at work
- Agreeing what to tell colleagues
- Provision under Conditions of Service
- Access to Right Core Care.

## **Monitoring, Evaluation and Review**

We will monitor instances of domestic abuse and evaluate our practices. We will review the policy every 3 years.

This will to help raise awareness among both staff and service users, and indicate that domestic abuse is taken seriously by Derby Homes. It will also ensure that the Policy is embedded within the organisation.

Policies remain empty rhetoric unless appropriate training and supervision are provided to integrate the policy into practices.