

Domestic Abuse, and Violence Against Women and Girls Policy

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy outlines our approach to dealing with Domestic Abuse against any residents and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).
- 1.2 It details the principles for providing assistance and taking action in cases of domestic abuse or VAWG.
- 1.3 While women and girls are disproportionately affected by all forms of VAWG, and some are gender specific such as Female Genital Mutilation, we will support those individuals experiencing VAWG or domestic abuse irrespective of age, sex, gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, religion, social background or any other protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act.
- 1.4 This policy aims to ensure that those who have experienced domestic abuse are supported in a sympathetic and sensitive way.
- 1.5 It should be read in conjunction with the following policies where applicable:
 - Allocations and Lettings policy
 - Tenancy Policy
 - Safeguarding Policy
 - Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
 - Lone working policy

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all ccha residents and household members including shared owners and leaseholders.
- 2.2 We will do all we can to help any of our residents or household members who are experiencing domestic abuse.
- 2.3 Some adults who are experiencing domestic abuse or VAWG may also require safeguarding, for example where there are additional vulnerabilities such as a disability. In such cases, a referral will be made to Adult Services.
- 2.4 Children living in a household with domestic abuse will always require safeguarding and will be referred to Children's Services in all cases.
- 2.5 Our approach to safeguarding aims to prevent and reduce the risk of harm to adults and children who are experiencing, or are at risk from, abuse or neglect.

3.0 Key terms and definitions

- 3.1 The term Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) refers to the following range of serious crime types which are predominantly, but not exclusively, experienced by women and girls: Domestic Violence and Abuse; Sexual Offences; Stalking; Female Genital Mutilation (FGM); Crimes Said to be Committed in the Name of 'Honour'; Forced Marriage; Prostitution; and Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation.
- 3.2 Where a resident is assessed to be at high risk of serious harm or homicide, we will refer their case directly to the local Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). MARAC is a multi-agency meeting where information is shared to ensure robust safety plans are in place for victims and their families.
- 3.3 Domestic abuse is any single incident, course of conduct or pattern of abusive behaviour between individuals aged 16 or over who are “personally connected” to each other as a result of being, or having been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. Children who see, hear or experience the effects of the abuse and are related to either of the parties are also considered victims of domestic abuse. Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following:
- Physical or sexual abuse
 - Violent or threatening behaviour
 - Controlling or coercive behaviour
 - Economic abuse - this means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on someone's ability to acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or obtain goods or services.
 - Psychological, emotional or other abuse - this includes incidences where the abusive party directs their behaviour at another person (e.g. a child).

4.0 Our approach

- 4.1 ccha will ensure residents are able to report domestic abuse or VAWG to us through a variety of methods, and we will investigate all reports that we receive. We will respond to reports within one working day.
- 4.2 We will ensure that our employees receive appropriate training relevant to their role.
- 4.3 We will work with our partners to support individuals experiencing domestic abuse or VAWG and, where appropriate, take action against perpetrators where we can do so without compromising the safety of the individual experiencing abuse.
- 4.4 We take a customer centred approach when working with individuals, family members and representatives, to support and assess their circumstances and

recognise the confidentiality of all the individuals concerned. However, the safety of the individual is paramount. Where an incident or offence is witnessed by a ccha member of staff, they will immediately call the police. Where high risk of serious harm or homicide is identified, we will share relevant and proportionate information with statutory and non-statutory services to minimise that risk.

- 4.5 At our first point of contact, we will aim to carry out a risk assessment using the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence (DASH) Risk Identification Checklist and will cocreate an action plan to provide support for the person experiencing domestic abuse or VAWG, their children and anyone else deemed to be at risk.
- 4.6 Where necessary, we will arrange, or attend, multi-agency meetings to ensure support is offered by all relevant agencies.
- 4.7 It may not always be possible but, where we can, we will try to accommodate residents' requests if they wish to speak to a member of staff of the same sex or of the same ethnic origin. Where necessary, we will provide translation services.
- 4.8 People experiencing abuse will be able to meet staff in confidence at our offices or at an agreed choice of safe venue. At the first point of contact, we will also agree the safe method and time of contact the individual wishes us to use.
- 4.9 In the case of joint tenancies, it should be noted that the perpetrator has the right of access to the tenancy file. Measures such as logging these cases as anonymous so that they are not associated with the tenancy and redacting confidential information will be taken to ensure that this is not seen by the perpetrator, or anyone representing the perpetrator.
- 4.10 Where required we will work with our partner agencies to help improve security to a resident's home.
- 4.11 We will make a referral to our Welfare Advisor and Debt Officer for support relating to financial issues.
- 4.12 We will signpost the individual experiencing domestic abuse or VAWG to relevant organisations to provide legal advice as appropriate.
- 4.13 We will refer people experiencing domestic abuse or VAWG to external agencies who can offer further advice and support dependent upon their needs, using specialist services where appropriate.
- 4.14 We will take action (where evidence is available) against anyone responsible for domestic abuse or VAWG. This will only be done in cases where we can do so without compromising the safety of the individual, and we will work closely with partner agencies and keep them informed of any action taken.
- 4.15 We will report incidents to the police on behalf of individuals or support them in doing so (with their permission), where they feel too intimidated to report

incidents themselves. We will also offer third party reporting services if requested.

- 4.16 Where emergency temporary accommodation is needed, we will support the person experiencing abuse to approach the Homeless Person's Unit of their choice. This can also involve referral to refuges via the National Domestic Violence Helpline.

5.0 Legislation and Regulation

- 5.1 Key legislation and regulation include:

- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Family Law Act 1996
- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 • Human Rights Act 1998
- The Housing Act 1996 • The Equality Act 2010 • Sexual Offences Act 2003
- The Data Protection Act 1998 and General Data Protection Regulation 7.

6.0 Responsibilities

- 6.1 The Operations Managers for Neighbourhoods and Housing Services will have overall responsibility for delivery and compliance.

7.0 Feedback

- 7.1 We may ask for feedback from those who report domestic abuse to us. This is to help understand if residents are satisfied with our service and to find out what we can do to improve.

8.0 Confidentiality & Data Protection

- 8.1 We will share information with other agencies in accordance with the Data Protection Act and GDPR. This may mean sharing relevant and proportionate information without the resident's consent, where appropriate.
- 8.2 For the purposes of this policy and how we manage the information that we hold on individuals as part of our management processes, we will comply with our obligations as set out under our Group Data Protection Policy.

9.0 Fair and Equal Treatment

- 9.1 We will make sure everyone is treated fairly and without discrimination, regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion or belief, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership and age. We will promote inclusion, challenge discrimination and seek to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that everyone can access our services and that no one is excluded inappropriately from any services or activities provided by us.

- 9.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and has indicated that this policy would not discriminate against any specific groups.

Version History	
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