



Domestic Abuse Policy 2023



THIS DOCUMENT IS TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH:	
1.	ASB Policy
2.	Domestic Abuse Procedure
3.	Tenancy sustainment Policy

REVISION HISTORY				
Revision date	Previous revision date	Summary of Changes	Changes marked	Version
01/08/2023		Whole Policy rewritten	No	2

DISTRIBUTION – This document has been distributed to:			
Name	Job Title	Date of Issue	Version

DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT	
<p><i>Approved by: Nicky McKenzie</i></p> <p><i>Date of approval: 26/10/2023</i></p>	<p>Next Review Date: <i>September 2025</i></p> <p><i>Version 1</i></p>
<p>Contact Officer: (Duty Holder) Rehousing Manager: Fuad Hussein</p> <p>Contact: (Responsible Person) Tenancy Support Manager: Andrea Tear</p>	

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Introduction

This policy follows the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the Statutory Guidance.

Northampton Partnership Homes - believe that no one should live in fear of domestic abuse. Any tenant or Housing Register applicant who advises that they are suffering or threatened with Domestic Abuse will be offered support and advice.

NPH recognises that reporting Domestic Abuse is difficult and all reports will be dealt with in a sensitive nature. Officers will respond in a flexible way taking into account the different outcomes that may be possible and appropriate.

Commitment

Our commitment is:

- To make a clear statement that domestic abuse is not acceptable.
- To support NPH residents and applicants who are affected by domestic abuse
- To encourage joined up working and appropriate information sharing.
- To raise awareness and training amongst the NPH workforce.
- To provide regular training for case workers and service managers where staff are the victims.

We have signed up to and fully support the Chartered Institute of Housing's 'Make a Stand' campaign which aims to ensure that all social housing providers across the UK are fully committed to tackling domestic abuse in the home.

Definition

Legal definition of domestic abuse

Domestic abuse involves any single incident or pattern of conduct where someone's behaviour towards another is abusive, and where the people involved are aged 16 or over and are, or have been, "personally connected" to each other regardless of gender or sexuality.

The abuse can involve, but is not limited to:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial

- emotional
- violent
- threatening
- controlling
- coercive behaviour.

‘Personal connected’ means the individuals concerned:

- are due to be, are currently, or have been, married or civil partners to each other
- are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- are, or have been, parents (or had a parental relationship) to the same child
- are relatives (the 2021 Domestic Abuse Act gives further definitions of ‘relatives’)

Children as victims of domestic abuse

Children are recognised as victims of domestic abuse in their own right if they see, hear or experience the effects of abuse between two personally connected individuals who are aged 16 or over. However, abusive behaviour directed at a person under the age of 16 is child abuse rather than domestic abuse.

Victim

Anyone can experience domestic abuse regardless of age, culture, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion or other characteristics. Domestic abuse not only occurs in intimate partner relationships but also includes violence between family and household members. Domestic abuse also includes

Honour- based violence - ‘A crime or incident which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community’.

Forced marriage - ‘A marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor’.

Female genital mutilation - ‘A collective term for a range of procedures which involve partial or total removal of the female genitalia for non-medical reasons’.

Dealing with cases of Domestic Abuse

Where a tenant or applicant is in fear, or the victim of Domestic Abuse, a team of NPH specialist domestic abuse officers will provide help and advice, and appropriate signposting to partner agencies within the borough, if appropriate to do so.

Each case will have an agreed action plan and a DASH risk assessment and be recorded on the ReACT case management system. Responses to the report will be within 1 working day unless the victim specifies otherwise.

The outcome score of the DASH will direct the officer to the required action and where necessary the cases will be put forward to MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference). NPH officers will be part of the MARAC panel, and work in partnership with all relevant agencies. They will act appropriately on all actions that come out of the MARAC meetings.

All information received will be treated as confidential and only shared with appropriate persons on the agreement of the victim. (There could be exceptions to this such as child protection issues, terrorism, and in discussions at MARAC).

Employees and contractors will use concern cards to report potential domestic abuse where necessary.

Security Measures

Extra security measures can be offered at the property e.g. door and window locks, extra lighting, sanctuary room etc. This will usually be upon request from the Police Crime Prevention Officer.

Damage to the property should be repaired ensuring the victim is not recharged where the damage is a result of domestic abuse.

Security measures will be provided at our discretion when deemed reasonable and necessary and may require a referral to an external agency for assistance.

Accommodation and Rehousing

We recognise that housing is normally a key issue in domestic abuse cases. We understand that many victims may not wish to move in order to maintain local family connections or avoid disruption to children and their schooling. We will work with the victim to manage the risks posed to them whilst remaining at the property, if safe to do so. A panel of NPH managers and specialist domestic abuse officers will make recommendations on the best options available to the victim, this includes management transfer on cases where it is safe for the victim to remain in their accommodation for a short period of time.

Rehousing Options

In cases where there is evidence that it is not safe for the victim and their family to remain in their home but it is safe for a move within Northampton, NPH Support Officer will support the victim to be referred to West Northamptonshire Council. NPH Support Officer will continue to support the victim throughout the rehousing process and assist the victim and their family to resettle in another location of Northampton.

Victims of domestic abuse will not be afforded priority for a move within Northampton on grounds of domestic abuse where an allocation within the borough would place them at continued risk of harm. This includes repeat victims of domestic abuse where multiple rehousing has occurred within the borough of Northampton.

Emergency move outside of Northampton

In some cases a move outside of Northampton will be the safest option for the victim and their family. In this situation, The Housing Support Officer will provide advice to the victim to make an approach to the local authority of their choosing or where they have a local connection.

In cases where emergency accommodation is required whilst an approach to another local authority is outstanding, Support Officer will refer the victim to West Northamptonshire Council and will support them to complete a jigsaw referral to the Housing Options team.

Tenants will not be encouraged to end their tenancy until they have secured alternative permanent accommodation or have had a full homelessness duty accepted.

Where applicable the victim will be advised to apply for benefits on both properties should this situation arise. NPH however recognises the issues this could cause with dual benefits and will offer to Nil the rent in cases where a duty to rehouse has been agreed by a Local Authority.

Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse

Joint tenants

Where the victim and the perpetrator hold a joint tenancy we cannot intervene to decide which party should occupy but we will suggest the victim seeks independent legal advice to consider their legal options such as

- Seeking an occupation order
- A court order to transfer the tenancy to their sole name

Action against Perpetrators

NPH will consider seeking possession of the property, under Ground 2A of the 1996 Housing Act, when a party has been forced to leave and has no intention of returning, as a result of the actions of their spouse or partner." Clause 13 of the West Northamptonshire Council Tenancy Agreement allows action against the perpetrator when left in a property that the victim has had to leave.

Perpetrators access to Housing

Where a known perpetrator of Domestic Abuse applies to the housing register for accommodation there will be a full investigation of their application. If robust information is received, then West Northamptonshire Council's Housing Allocation Policy will be followed and the applicant not allowed access to the Housing Register.

Where a person has already been accepted but where information is received that they are a perpetrator of domestic violence, then the application will be placed into the reduced priority band.

Employees of NPH

NPH will offer support to any employee who is experiencing domestic abuse. We recognise that domestic abuse and the fear of it can overshadow people's lives and therefore will affect their work. NPH will ensure that any employee who is a victim will receive confidential help and support as well as offering information/referral to a specialist agency for support.

Working with others

NPH will work with relevant agencies in order to respond to the needs of those experiencing domestic abuse. This includes, MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference), The Police, West Northamptonshire Council's Housing Options Service and Anti-Social Behaviour Unit, The Sunflower Centre, Refuge and Domestic Abuse Services, and both Children and Adult Services.

Confidentiality and Consent

All staff will respect confidentiality when dealing with reports of domestic abuse. There are some circumstances in which we are required by law to disclose information given to us, for example in cases involving safeguarding children or vulnerable adults, or for the purposes of the prevention and detection of crime. We will discuss this obligation with the person making the disclosure where possible. Where we are under a duty to disclose safeguarding concerns we will refer the matter to the relevant agency in accordance with our Safeguarding Policy.

Information Sharing

NPH and relevant partner agencies may share information for the purpose of the prevention and detection of crime under section 115 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and various provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018. We will participate in Information Sharing Protocols where appropriate to enable us and key local agencies to exchange information for use in reducing and addressing domestic abuse.

Where appropriate a warning flag will be placed on the property address where the perpetrator remains.

Equalities

Northampton is a diverse borough with many different people and communities. This policy is designed to ensure that all NPH tenants, those applying to the housing register and NPH employees who are affected by domestic abuse irrespective of age, gender, disability, ethnicity or race, religion or sexuality can access the support they need appropriately and fairly. This also applies to those that may face additional barriers including, but in no way limited to, no recourse to public funds (NRPF); English as a second language, mental health; disability, age; sexual orientation; and gender.

Training

We will provide all staff responsible for implementing this policy with comprehensive training as required. Support Officers are fully qualified Domestic Abuse Prevention Advocates and have been fully trained by the leading training providers Women's Aid for Tackling and Preventing Domestic and Sexual Violence/Abuse.

Review and Monitoring

We will monitor reports of Domestic Abuse received, action taken and outcomes achieved and case management in accordance with our Anti-Social behaviour policy.

We will formally review this policy every two years unless changes in legislation or regulation require an earlier review.

Community Impact Assessment

1. About your review

Name of the project, strategy, policy, process, or service under review:				
Domestic Abuse Policy 2024				
Is the project, strategy, policy, process, or service: (remove nonapplicable) CURRENT REVISED NEW				
Which customer groups will be impacted?	CURRENT TENANTS	CURRENT LEASEHOLDERS	STAFF	OTHERS (name)
All current tenants and occupants	Any current tenant and occupants who experience domestic abuse as defined in the 2021 Domestic Abuse Act.	Leaseholders will not form part of this policy and any assistance required would be provided by the Local Authority as defined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.	Staff who are affected by this, whether tenants or not will be supported by this policy.	None
Summary of the project, new or revised strategy, policy, process, or service:		CIA carried out by:		
Domestic Abuse policy and procedure reviewed to reflect new domestic abuse Act and to meet the requirements as set out in the statutory guidance.		Lead officer/Staff: Fuad Hussein/Andrea Tear		
Document Management				
Approved by: EMT / SMT	Last review date: Next review date: March 2026	Contact Officer: <i>(Name/Job title)</i> Fuad Hussein – Rehousing Manager		
Date of approval:	Version: 2	Service area: Housing		

2. Relevant Equality Monitoring Data

Use this section to give as much information as possible about helpful customer data. Think about: customer profiling, complaints, compliments, satisfaction surveys and census data.

Equality Data Monitoring		
What internal equality data do you use to monitor this policy?	Internal or external data?	Engagement?
Data from Capita (Open Housing)	Internal	
Complaint's data	Internal	
Information from visiting officers	Internal	Reporting officer invited to DA Panel.
Data from ReACT (case management software)	Internal	

3. Analysis of Impact on Equality

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relationships with protected groups. Consider how this project, strategy, policy, or service review will achieve these aims.

Protected Characteristics	Which groups would be affected	Impact (Positive/Negative/Neutral)	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Race and ethnicity	All	<p>Positive – completing risk assessment to identify all risks and potential for harm, some forms of violence are cultural.</p> <p>Negative – Language barrier if English is not first language,</p>		SMT are currently exploring a translation service with AA global, this should then mitigate the risks around language barrier.

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		translation will be required which is not readily available		
Disability	Possibly	<p>Positive – Tenancy support team to assist with support and signposting/referral to specialist supporting agencies, assessment to take into account protected characteristics and equality act 2010</p> <p>Negative – Mental health poses greater risks as there is possibility victim may not understand what is happening to them is classed as DA, We will work with the victim/survivor to help them but it may also be necessary to take enforcement action to keep the victim safe.</p>		Referral / signpost to other agencies for information
Sex	No			
Age	Possibly	<p>Positive – Our Policy works in line with our safeguarding policy to both tenants and their occupants.</p> <p>Negative – Our Policy is in line with the domestic abuse act and will assist where an occupant is above the age of 16, younger victims/survivors will be under the safeguarding of West Northants Council’s Children Services</p>		Referral – signposting to West Northampton Council (WNC) Children Services
Religion or Belief	No			

Gender Reassignment	No			
Sexual Orientation	No			
Pregnancy and Maternity	No			
Marriage and Civil Partnership	No			
Evidence Base: (Evidence used / likelihood / size of impact) How certain are you about the assessment of each potential impact, and what evidence have you used to arrive at the decision? E.g., Data – population trends data, census data, service data. Research – national, regional, local research. Engagement/Consultation – with partners, the public, the voluntary sector.				

4. Analysis of Impact on Well-being

Well-being – Use this section to determine how the project, strategy, policy, process, or service will impact on a customer’s health and wellbeing, and whether the proposal will impact on the demands for, or access to our services.				
Category Area	Which groups could be affected	Impact (Positive/Negative/Neutral)	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Mental Health and Wellbeing	All	Positive - The behaviour and the way we respond can highlight a support need we would otherwise have been unaware of	Some members of staff may not be equipped to recognise the underlying issues and act appropriately. Customers may not recognise their issues or wish to	

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			discuss them or receive support.	
Healthy Lifestyles	No			
Accidents and Falls Prevention	No			
Access to referral of other services/partners	Yes	Positive – recent collaborative working between NPH, WNC, Voice and Sunflower is really positive and will lead to better outcomes for our residents. This includes agreements from WNC for our residents to access temporary accommodation		
Independent Living	No			
Safeguarding	Yes	Positive – through assessing risk, children under		
Other	Yes	Positive – our support officers are trained IDVAs who are able to identify and support victims/survivors more appropriately than some other support officers who are not IDVAs		Ensure CPD is available for IDVAs to keep up to date with DA policies and good practice
Evidence Base: Evidence used / likelihood / size of impact)				

How certain are you about the assessment of each potential impact, and what evidence have you used to arrive at the decision?
 E.g., Data – population trends data, census data, service data. Research – national, regional, local research. Engagement/Consultation – with partners, the public, the voluntary sector.

1. Analysis of Impact on Community

Use the following template to highlight the impacts of your proposal on each of the following categories: The Economy, the Environment, and Localities/Communities.

Community Impact Assessment – A Community Impact Assessment (CIA) helps us make sure our policies, strategies and projects do not discriminate against anyone in respect of disability, gender, and racial equality.			
Impact and groups that could be affected	Impact (Positive, neutral, negative)	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Impact to the Economy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	Neutral		
Impact to the Environment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	Neutral		
Impact to localities / communities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>E.G., disadvantaged groups, for example, carers, veterans, and military staff, homeless, rurality, low income etc.</i> 	Positive	See above pages 6 and 7	See above pages 6 and 7
Other:	Positive – our support officers are trained IDVAs who are able to identify and support victims/survivors more appropriately than some other support officers who are not IDVAs		
Evidence Base: (Evidence used / likelihood / size of impact)			

How certain are you about the assessment of each potential impact, and what evidence have you used to arrive at the decision?
 E.g., Data – population trends data, census data, service data. Research – national, regional, local research. Engagement/Consultation – with partners, the public, the voluntary sector.

2. Taking action

A Community Impact Assessment cannot be signed off until negative outcomes are addressed. What actions you have taken or plan to take to remove and/or reduce negative outcomes?

Actions identified from CIA	Target completion date	Responsible Officer	Is this action identified in any other monitoring framework?	Comments

3. Assessment Review and Sign Off

Assessment Review completed by: *Officer lead and Assistant Director/Head of Service*
 Kelly Fitzgerald, Rehousing head of service

Comments:

No further actions

Next review date:
 May 2024

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Name:	Fuad Hussein	Date:	07/06/2024
Directorate:	Housing	Signature:	

GUIDANCE NOTES

Part 1: Identifying who is responsible for the CIA

1. Your CIA is owned at service-level, with officers from within the service that is being analysed taking responsibility for the data gathering, the analysis, the authorising, and the action planning. Assistant Director-level /Head of Service sign off at the completion of the CIA means that there is a wider accountability at a senior level.
2. Immediate responsibility sits with the lead manager for the project/strategy or policy or service under review – this individual will normally be a senior manager within the service (i.e., Team Leader/Manager), who is linked into the decision-making process.

Part 2: Relevant equality monitoring

3. In this section you will need to provide data which is relevant for equality monitoring. Use this section to give as much information as possible, you should consider:
 - What relevant equality information do I have available and where can I get this from?
 - Does my data display a blend of quantitative and qualitative evidence?
 - Can I use data from national and or local research reports, the Census, customer profiling, feedback data, and complaints?
 - What previous data collection / research / engagement exercises can I draw on?
 - Will a focused engagement process fill the gaps?

Part 3: Analysing the impact on equality

4. Using the evidence that you have gathered, you should now be able to interrogate it to answer the question “if I take action X, what will the actual or potential outcomes of this activity be on equality?”
5. It is important that your CIA specifically identifies the impacts on equality, an impact that affects all customers in the same way, regardless of if they have a protected characteristic or not. Whilst completing this section, consider “Does this function affect different groups of people differently?”

6. Where your CIA identifies a potential impact, it is important to state the nature of this impact and any risks associated to implementing this policy. Where risks are identified, it is important to state any mitigating actions which lessen the risk.
7. It is essential that your CIA is evidence-based and that a golden thread can be followed from your data, through your analysis to your conclusions. Do not rely on stereotypes, or on generalisations that cannot be evidenced.
8. This section must be completed in conjunction with the NPH Equality and Diversity Strategy, against the Equality and Diversity Objectives and Implementation plan.

Part 4: Analysing the impact on Well-being

9. Use this section to determine how the policy will impact on resident's health and wellbeing, and whether the proposal will impact on the demands for, or access to health and care provisions. Please consider the Care Act 2014 and the Health and Social Care Act 2012.
10. Use this section to identify which groups could be affected, where the policy might impact Safeguarding.
11. Where your CIA identifies a potential impact, it is important to state the nature of this impact and any risks associated to implementing this policy. Where risks are identified, it is important to state any mitigating actions which lessen the risk.
12. This section must be completed in conjunction with the NPH Equality and Diversity Strategy, against the Equality and Diversity Objectives and Implementation plan.

Part 5: Analysing the impact on community

13. A Community Impact Assessment (CIA) will help you to identify the potential impacts and outcomes of your proposed policy or service. Doing this at an early stage enables engagement and research to be undertaken to identify actions that will either lessen the risk or maximise benefits. Using this section, identify groups which may be impacted directly by an NPH policy or service.
14. In this section it is important to think "Wider Community". Which social groups fall within NPH's demographic? Do not rely on stereotypes, or on generalisations that cannot be evidenced.

15. This section must be completed in conjunction with the NPH Equality and Diversity Strategy, against the Equality and Diversity Objectives and Implementation plan.

Part 6: Taking action

16. Where actions have arisen from your CIA, ensure that these are recorded on the CIA Action Plan towards the end of the template, or that you indicate which other action plan they have been embedded within.

Part 7: Assessment review and sign off

17. Your CIA should be commenced at the earliest practical stage in the decision-making process. This will normally be once a proposal has been arrived at, but before a decision has been reached. Your CIA will analyse the impacts of the proposal on equality, to inform the final decision making.
18. Your completed CIA will require Director-level sign off to demonstrate Directorate level accountability for its contents. Sign-off must be in the form.
19. It is important to monitor the impacts that your CIA has highlighted and to evaluate whether the actions in your CIA Action Plan have been implemented and are effective. Where actions have not been effective, they should be revisited and revised accordingly.
20. It is recommended that your CIA review takes place 12 months after the function that was originally being assessed has been implemented. Your CIA Action Plan should timetable this review in.
21. A Community Impact Assessment form must be completed for all proposed projects, strategies, policies, processes, and service reviews. These documents will be scrutinised and implemented by EMT. Further reviews will be conducted.

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