

Neighbourhoods & Housing – (Domestic Abuse Policy)

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1. Introduction

Domestic Abuse is an abhorrent crime, which will affect 1 in 4 women, and 1 in 6 men. According to research carried out by the Office for National Statistics, approximately 2.3 million people aged 16 and over experienced domestic abuse in 2023/24.

In 2021, the Domestic Abuse Act created a new statutory definition of domestic abuse which is: *“Any single incident or a course of conduct of physical or sexual abuse, violence or threatening behaviour, controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse, psychological, emotional or other abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been personally connected to each other.”*

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 also recognises children and young people as victims of domestic abuse if they see, hear, or experience the effects of the abuse, and are related to either the victim or perpetrator.

We recognise domestic abuse is a widespread and a serious issue affecting tenants and residents across our communities and is recognised as a major cause of homelessness. This policy sets out Hull City Council's Neighbourhoods and Housing approach to dealing with domestic abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 requires local authorities to conduct a local needs assessment every three years, to determine the level of support required within safe accommodation in their area. To demonstrate that we were viewing the issue through the lens of equality and diversity, a comprehensive Equality Impact Analysis was completed which has informed this policy. A copy of this document can be found here [Hull EIA DA safe accommodation needs assessment](#)

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy is applicable to all Neighbourhoods and Housing staff. All staff are responsible for adhering to the principles outlined within this policy and related procedures.
- 2.2 We will work in conjunction with third parties, including contractors to ensure they uphold our values, commitments and principles.
- 2.3 This policy applies to all members of the public who engage with Neighbourhoods and Housing. This includes, but is not limited to, Hull City Council tenants, leaseholders, their household members, and any resident who access Neighbourhood and Housing Services such as those seeking help with homelessness.

- 2.4** Throughout this policy the term “we” and “our” is used, which refers to Neighbourhoods and Housing Service.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

- 3.1** We believe domestic abuse is everyone’s business, and it is the responsibility of all staff to help protect and safeguard vulnerable adults and children.
- 3.2** It is essential that staff across all areas understand their roles and responsibilities in responding to domestic abuse to ensure we continue to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of victims in all our work. This will be supported through various means, including but not limited to the implementation of Domestic Abuse Champions, regular supervision, assurance monitoring and appropriate training.
- 3.3** All staff will receive domestic abuse training appropriate to their role to equip them with the skills to recognise the signs of domestic abuse, and how to respond appropriately.
- 3.4** New employees must enrol on domestic abuse training at the earliest available opportunity, and all staff are expected to refresh their training every three years. Compliance of this policy is expected from first day of employment and any concerns relating to domestic abuse must be escalated immediately through the appropriate channels.

4. Definitions and Terminology

- 4.1** **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 and Harassment
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM);
- Crimes Said to be Committed in the Name of ‘Honour’
- Forced Marriage
- Prostitution
- Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation.

A full definition is provided here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy>

- 4.2** **Domestic Abuse** is defined in the Domestic Abuse 2021 act as

'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

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

Any reference in this Act to a victim of domestic abuse includes a reference to a child who—

- a. (a)sees or hears, or experiences the effects of, the abuse, and
- b. (b)is related to A or B.

4.3 Physical abuse is defined as any intentional act causing injury or trauma to another person through bodily contact. Some examples of physical abuse are:

- Punching, slapping, hitting, pinching, kicking, scratching or biting
- Applying pressure to a victims neck including strangulation
- Pulling hair out
- Using objects as weapons
- Punching walls or breaking things

4.4 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 regulating their everyday behaviour.

4.5 Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern or acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim.

4.6 Economic abuse means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on the victim's ability to acquire, use and maintain economic resources such as money, transportation and utilities. It can make the individual economically dependent on the abuser, thereby limiting their ability to escape and access safety. Examples of economic abuse include:

- having sole control of the family income;

- preventing a victim from claiming welfare benefits;
- interfering with a victim's education, training, or employment;
- not allowing or controlling a victim's access to mobile phone/transport/utilities/food;
- damage to a victim's property

4.7 Psychological and emotional abuse is patterns of behaviour that harm an individual's emotional well-being and sense of self-worth, such as manipulation, intimidation, and constant criticism.

4.8 Personally connected captures different types of relationships, including ex-partners and family members. A full list:

- They are or have been married to each other
- They are or have been civil partners of each other
- They have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- They have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- They are or have been in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- They each have or there has been a time when they each have had a parental relationship in relation to the same child
- They are relatives

4.9 A victim is any individual who experiences domestic abuse. Domestic abuse can affect anyone, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality, or background.

4.10 A child means a person under the age of 18 years. A child is related to a person if the person is a parent of, or has parental responsibility for the child, or the child and the person are relatives.

4.11 Routine enquiry refers to asking all women about their experience of domestic abuse, regardless of whether or not there are any signs of abuse or whether abuse is suspected. The reason that this tool is used with women only is because domestic abuse is a gendered issue that disproportionately affects women. Also commonly known as 'screening', this approach particularly helps to increase the rates of identification within vulnerable groups and very much aligns to the principles of the early help and intervention model.

4.12 Selective Enquiry is used when staff suspect that a service user, either female or male, may be experiencing domestic abuse.

4.13 Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) Is a local meeting where representatives from statutory and non-statutory agencies meet to

discuss individuals at high risk of serious harm or homicide because domestic abuse.

- 4.14 Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination (MATAC)** is a multi-agency meeting approach that focuses on identifying serial perpetrators of domestic abuse and is intended to reduce reoffending of the most harmful and serial domestic abuse perpetrators and to safeguard victims and families.
- 4.15 Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)** is a multi-agency approach to ensure that arrangements are in place to ensure the successful management of violent and sexual offenders.
- 4.16 Female genital mutilation (FGM)** is any procedure involving partial or total removal of the female external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.
- 4.17 Trauma Informed** is based on the understanding that trauma exposure can significantly impact both individuals' development and life chances. This is as well as the ability to feel safe or develop trusting relationships and can also affect communities.
- 4.18 Domestic abuse, stalking and honour-based abuse (DASH) risk assessment** is a tool used by professionals that are working with victims and is designed to help identify the level of risk posed to an adult victim of domestic abuse.

5. Key Principles

- 5.1** Domestic abuse is completely unacceptable and will be met with a zero-tolerance approach upheld by all. We will actively use our influence and resources to make clear that perpetrators are fully accountable for their actions, and that victims are never to blame.
- 5.2** We will prioritise the safety of victims and their children in every aspect of decision making and intervention.
- 5.3** We understand that without effective intervention domestic abuse often escalates in severity. We will make every effort to reach adult and child victims earlier.
- 5.4** We will maximise choices for domestic abuse victims and empower them to make informed decisions about their lives wherever possible.
- 5.5** We will actively work to develop competent services which are sensitive to the diverse range of individuals and communities.
- 5.6** We have adopted the policy of carrying out "Routine Enquiry" where it is safe to do so with all female tenants at the start of their tenancy, and "Selective

Enquiry” with both female and male tenants at other points where there is reason to believe that the customer may be experiencing domestic abuse.

- 5.7 We have adopted a multi-agency protocol that sets out the minimum expectations for staff when working with victims of domestic abuse. By adhering to these standards, we can ensure that our customers always receive a supportive, appropriate and consistent response
- 5.8 Domestic abuse can be experienced by anyone irrespective of gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality or background.
- 5.9 We are proud to be accredited by Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) and remain fully committed to upholding their eight priority areas and standards across all levels of our service delivery.

6. How to report domestic abuse to us.

- 6.1 Everyone deserves to feel safe in their home. For residents experiencing domestic abuse the [Domestic Abuse Housing Hub](#) can be contacted. Tenants of Hull City Council can also contact their Tenancy Officer to arrange a confidential meeting to discuss their options and support available.
- 6.4 Victims who require emergency accommodation outside of normal working hours can contact the Hull City Council out of hours team.
- 6.5 Victims who feel threatened or at risk of violence, should call the police immediately by calling 999. If calling 999 from a mobile and the individual cannot speak, they should press 55 and the call will be transferred to the police.
- 6.6 A list of contact details for specialist domestic abuse services available both locally and nationally can be found at Section 17.

7. Responding to reports of domestic abuse

- 7.1 We will treat victims with respect and dignity and will take a victim-led approach. We will listen to them and believe their experience of abuse; take seriously their concerns and seek to understand and strengthen their safety strategies. Our practice will be trauma-informed, with a focus on avoiding re-traumatisation during all interactions
- 7.3 We will not require victims to provide evidence to access support. Disclosures will be responded to with belief, sensitivity, and without judgment, ensuring that safety and dignity remain our top priority.
- 7.4 Where appropriate, specific staff members will conduct DASH risk assessments and receive enhanced training to effectively assess the nature of

the abuse, identify current and potential risks, and determine when to refer to MARAC, along with any additional support needs.

- 7.5 We will support victims in collaboration with other services, including both internal and external partners such as domestic abuse specialists to ensure that victims receive all possible support.
- 7.6 Victims will be awarded a priority need for rehousing if they are fleeing due to domestic abuse and we will work closely with them to identify alternative accommodation, which may include temporary accommodation including refuge.
- 7.7 Where victims wish to remain in their home, support will be provided to help promote their safety and wellbeing. This may include, but not limited to, assistance with accessing target hardening, [Sanctuary Scheme](#), obtaining non-molestation orders, applying for temporary absence if claiming benefits, and legal interventions to exclude the perpetrator such as injunctions.
- 7.8 When supporting victims, we will also consider their broader network including children, non-dependants, and other vulnerable individuals who may be affected.

8. Confidentiality.

- 8.1 Wherever possible and safe, we will seek to obtain consent prior to sharing any personal information. However, it is not always necessary to seek consent to share personal information about a child or adult, if we intend to share information as part of action to safeguard a child or adult at possible risk of harm.
- 8.2 We will respect confidentiality and privacy wherever possible and understand the importance of information sharing in the context of domestic abuse.
- 8.3 Domestic abuse cases will be logged and managed on our case management system and information will be stored in line with GDPR and data protection policies and retention periods.
- 8.4 Any unauthorised access or sharing of information will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter, in line with our disciplinary procedures. Staff must immediately report any data breach to our [information governance team](#).

9. Partnership working

- 9.1 We work closely in partnership and collaboration with other services including local domestic abuse specialists, to deliver a coordinated community response. For example:
 - Hull Women's Aid
 - Hull Domestic Abuse Partnership (DAP)
 - Preston Road Women's Centre

- Strength to Change
- Humberside Police
- Safeguarding Children
- Safeguarding Adults
- Hull ReNew

A list of useful contacts can be found at Section 17.

- 9.2** We recognise the importance of specialist domestic abuse services in providing a voice to victims, children and young people and guiding us on safe practice.
- 9.3** We will identify and share with partner agencies any gaps, challenges and unmet need within our service.
- 9.4** We will share information through the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangement (MAPPA) and Multi Agency Tasking and Coordination (MATAC) forums and with the police where necessary.
- 9.5** We recognise the relationship between domestic abuse and safeguarding children and adults. We will keep the safety of victims including children at the forefront of our approach and where appropriate make safeguarding referrals to both children and adults' services.

10. Equality and Diversity

- 10.1** We will support all individuals experiencing domestic abuse irrespective of age, gender, sexuality, disability, gender reassignment, ethnicity, religion, social background or any other protected characteristics. However, we acknowledge that domestic abuse is a gender-based crime and women and girls are disproportionately affected by all forms of VAWG, including some which are gender specific such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).
- 10.2** We are committed to ensuring that equality and diversity are integral to our approach, ensuring we are inclusive and accessible to everyone.
- 10.3** We will consider any additional needs and barriers a victim may face and will work with them to overcome these. We will consider how needs and barriers can impact their engagement with services and support.
- 10.4** We understand that people can face multiple forms of discrimination at once and take this into account when supporting each victim.
- 10.5** We work closely with other services to support victims with intersecting needs and multiple disadvantages.
- 10.6** Our publicity and awareness initiatives are aimed to reach everyone, including those from minority and marginalised groups. We strive to ensure that everyone feels represented and confident in accessing our services.

11. Perpetrator Accountability

- 11.1** We will work as part of a coordinated community response to tackle domestic abuse, with a focus on holding perpetrators to account while ensuring the safety and well-being of victims. Our decision-making process will carefully assess and mitigate any potential risks.
- 11.2** We will ensure wherever possible that actions taken against perpetrators are victim-led and trauma informed, whilst safeguarding the wider community's safety.
- 11.3** We will work with local domestic abuse specialists and partners to identify the primary perpetrators where there are counter-allegations of harm to ensure we are supporting the victim.
- 11.4** Where appropriate, we will exercise the tools available to us, which may include but not limited to, recharging perpetrators for any damages they have caused to our properties and pursuing legal action such as extending an introductory tenancy, eviction, and disqualification from Council Housing.
- 11.5** Where appropriate, we will work with perpetrators of domestic abuse to support them to access behaviour intervention services, mental health, substance misuse and any other relevant services with the aim of reducing harm and promoting accountability.

12. Compliance and Monitoring

- 12.1** This policy will be reviewed every 3 years unless legislation, business or sector developments require otherwise – to ensure that it continues to meet the stated commitments and take account of good practice developments.
- 12.2.** This policy will be reviewed to reflect feedback, Domestic Abuse Related Deaths Reviews (DARDR), and Serious Case Reviews, where recommended.
- 12.3** The delivery of this policy will be monitored through a range of mechanisms including but not limited to, case audits and reviews, line management of relevant staff, assurance monitoring, monitoring of training records and feedback gathered from both victims and partner organisations. This will enable us to assess the services currently offered and determine whether further improvements can be made.

13. Complaints

- 13.1** You have the right to raise a complaint where you feel that the standards have not been met and or where you believe this policy has not been applied. Any such complaint will be dealt with in line with HCC's Customer Feedback Policy and Procedure and any lessons learnt are fed back to the relevant service area within HCC for review.
- 13.2** Complaints can be made in the following ways:

- Online, by completing and submitting the customer feedback form on the HCC website [Customer Feedback - Complaints, Suggestions and Compliments](#)
- By telephoning the Council's Contact Centre on 01482 300 300
- By visiting one of the Council's Customer Service Centres
- By writing to: FREEPOST RSJC-KKBE-ABXZ, Customer Feedback Team, PO Box 15, HU1 2AB
- By providing information to a Hull City Council officer in person, in writing or over the telephone

14 . Legislative Context

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare's Law)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing 2014
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2014
- Police and Justice Act 2006
- Child Safeguarding legislation including Children Act 2004
- Domestic Violence Crime and Victim Act 2004 (S9 implemented in 2011)
- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2023
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Care Act 1996
- Social Housing Act 2023
- Housing Act 1996
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Equality Act 2010
- Family Law Act 1996
- Destitution Domestic Violence (DDV) Concession scheme
- Care Act 2014

15.Relevant Consumer Standards

15.1 The relevant Consumer Standards covered by this Policy are:

- Neighbourhood and Community ([April 2024 - Neighbourhood and Community Standard FINAL.pdf](#))

- Tenancy Standard ([April 2024 - Tenancy Standard FINAL.pdf](#))
- Safety and Quality [April 2024 - Safety and Quality Standard FINAL.pdf](#)

16. Links to related Policies, Procedures and Documents.

- Domestic Abuse Neighbourhoods and Housing Procedure
- Child Safeguarding Policy
- Adult Safeguarding Policy
- Tenancy Management Procedure
- Allocations Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- Rent Arrears Procedure Manual
- Domestic Abuse Strategy
- Domestic Abuse Minimum Standards document
- Data Protection Policy

17. Useful contacts

Organisation	Telephone number	Website
Domestic Abuse Housing Hub (Housing Options)	01482 612040 (press 1)	Domestic Abuse Housing Hub Help with homelessness Hull
Domestic Abuse Partnership (female)	01482 318 759	Hull DAP – Hull DAP
Domestic Abuse Partnership (male)	01482 613978	
Preston Road Women's Centre	01482 790 310	Purple House – Preston Road Women's Centre
Women's Aid	01482 446 099 (local) 01482 474 133 (local children's services) 08082 000 247 (national)	Hull Women's Aid Women's Aid
Karma Nirvana (Honour Based Abuse)	08005999247	Karma Nirvana

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True Honour (Honour Based Abuse)	07480621711	truehonour.org.uk
Halo Project (Honour Based Abuse)	01642683045	haloproject.org.uk
Home office forced marriage unit	Office hours - 02070 080 151 Out of hours - 02070 081 500	Forced marriage - GOV.UK
Hourglass (abuse of elderly people)	08088088141	Hourglass
SignHealth (support for deaf adults and young people)	TEXT ONLY 07800 003421	Domestic Abuse Service - SignHealth
GALOP- National (LGBT+ Victims and Survivors of Abuse and Violence)	0800 999 5428	Galop - the LGBT+ anti-abuse charity
Travellers Movement (Gypsy, Roma and Traveller)	0754 1637 795	Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence The Traveller Movement
Southall Black Sisters	0208570800	southallblacksisters.org.uk
Refuge - 24 hour help line	08082 000 247	Homepage - National Domestic Abuse Helpline
The Blue Door (sexual violence and abuse)	08001974787	thebluedoor.org
Victim Support	01482 305 080 (local) 08453 030 900 (national)	Victim Support
Suzy Lamplugh Trust (Stalking and Harassment)	08088020300	suzylamplugh.org
Respect - support for men to stop domestic abuse	08451 228 609	Respect Home
Strength to Change - Support for men to stop	01482 613 403	Hull Strength To Change

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