

Newark & Sherwood District Council

Domestic Abuse Policy

Keeping People Safe from Harm and Domestic Abuse

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1 Document Version Control

	Last Modified	Last Modified By	Document Changes
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3 Domestic Abuse Policy for Residents

3.1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out our commitment to dealing with domestic abuse, supporting survivors and holding perpetrators of domestic abuse to account. It sets out our core aims, values and principles and outlines how we will ensure survivors are seen, heard and believed without judgement.

It explains how we can support you and how we will work in partnership with other agencies to ensure your needs are met. This policy covers all residents, tenants and service users.

We have a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse and we will listen to your views when deciding on the best course of action. We believe that no person should live in fear of violence or abuse.

We will raise awareness of domestic abuse in the local community to ensure it does not remain hidden.

3.2 Scope

This policy is for all residents of Newark and Sherwood District Council regardless whether it is a council, private or rented property. We have a separate policy for staff experiencing domestic abuse.

3.3 Definition of Domestic Abuse

Link to full government definition

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/part/1/enacted>

Domestic abuse is defined as any of the following:

Physical abuse can include: hitting, punching, kicking, slapping, hitting with objects, pulling hair, pushing or shoving, cutting or stabbing, restraining, strangulation, choking.

Sexual abuse can include: rape and coerced sex, forcing a victim to take part in unwanted sexual acts, refusal to practice safe sex or use contraception, threatened or actual sexual abuse of children.

Violent, threatening behaviour, psychological, emotional or other abuse.

This can leave you with little confidence to change your situation, or that you are powerless to take any action to improve your life, or the lives of your children. This can include Isolating you and not allowing you to see friends or family, or go anywhere on your own, using threats – threats to kill family, children, friends, or pets, or to find you if you were ever to try and leave, putting you down – humiliating, embarrassing or undermining you in front of others.

Economic abuse can include controlling money and bank accounts, making you tell them everything you spend, running up debts in your name, allowing you no say on how you spend your money, refusing to allow you to work.

Discriminatory abuse is motivated by an oppressive and discriminatory attitude towards a person's: Disability, Physical appearance, Learning disability, Mental ill health, Sensory impairment, Race, Religion, Gender/gender identity, Age, Culture, Sexual orientation, Appearance.

Controlling or coercive behaviour underpins domestic abuse and is explained as a range of purposeful behaviours including intimidation, isolation, emotional abuse and manipulation. These behaviours are used in order to achieve power and control in an abusive relationship and reinforce the threat or reality of physical abuse

Modern day slavery, coercive control, so called honour-based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

It doesn't matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or part of an ongoing pattern of behaviour.

For the definition and policy to apply, both people must be aged 16 or over and personally connected. Personally connected is defined as people who:

- are married to each other
- are civil partners of each other
- have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement is still in place)
- have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement is still in place)
- are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- are, or have been, parents of the same child or children
- are relatives.

Children aged under 18 are also recognised as survivors in their own right if they see, hear or experience the effects of the abuse or are related to the survivor or the perpetrator and safeguarding procedures will be considered.

Domestic abuse is a gendered crime, which is deeply rooted, in the societal inequality between women and men.

Any woman can experience domestic abuse regardless of race, ethnic or religious group, sexuality, class, or disability, but some women who experience other forms of oppression and discrimination may face further barriers to disclosing abuse and finding help.

We recognise that men can also be victims of domestic abuse, however, these experiences disproportionately affect women and girls, who are targeted because of their gender.

3.4 Access to Support

We will provide an environment that is safe and encourages everyone to disclose incidents of domestic abuse and to be given the right advice first time, every time. We will ensure all support offered is based on individual need and ensure our services are inclusive and accessible.

Your information will be stored on a secure system which enables us to log support you have received and share information within Newark and Sherwood District Council teams and with partner agencies as appropriate. You will be informed what data will be stored, your right to access this data and reasons why this data might be shared in order to safeguard.

We will do all we can to ensure you and your family are safe and protected. We will listen to you, support you, and believe you without judgement and not make any assumptions about your experiences. We will listen to what you need and want, respect your choices, support and empower you to make decisions about your safety and housing security.

We will give you a voice as we recognise that survivors are the expert in their experiences and we will use this knowledge to inform the development, delivery and improvement of our services and embed good practice. We will be open, honest and transparent with you at all times.

We will ensure all staff receive training on domestic abuse and they are confident in dealing with disclosures of domestic abuse effectively. We have safeguarding champions who receive additional training. We will use language that is empowering and take the onus of the abuse away from you.

We will support you to complete a safety plan which is a way of helping you to protect yourself and/or your children, helps you plan in advance for the possibility of future abuse and helps you to think about how you can increase your safety either within the relationship or if you decide to leave or end the relationship.

We will give you your options so you can make an informed decision on what you want to happen. If we are concerned about your safety and/or the safety of your children, we will discuss with you our duty to take this further with or without your consent.

We will assess your safety and risk using the Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment (DASH) risk assessment. This is a form used UK wide to discuss safety and options.

We will respect and maintain confidentiality, privacy and security of your personal information unless there is a safeguarding concern which we will discuss with you first. We will discuss your housing and tenancy options with you and will make every effort to ensure that a safe environment is provided and we will work alongside specialist agencies to provide advice and assistance.

We recognise that no single agency can tackle domestic abuse and all agencies may hold information that could be crucial to survivor safety. We will work in partnership and share information as appropriate to maximise safety.

We have relationships with specialist domestic abuse agencies and we can signpost you and/or your children to their services if you choose this as an option. They can also support you to access civil and criminal laws, to offer protection and to prevent further abuse. We will promote and provide information on domestic abuse and raise awareness through campaigns and events. We will make available information about the services we offer and partner agencies who can support in a variety of ways including on our website and on internal notice boards.

We will challenge attitudes about domestic abuse and ensure it is spoken about and visible to end the silence and hidden nature of domestic abuse

3.5 How we hold perpetrators to account

We recognise survivors are never responsible for domestic abuse. We will take away any responsibility put on you by using empowering language and ensure we do not 'victim blame' in our terminology. For example: Not saying why doesn't she leave but instead using terms like why would he do that to you?

We will take action to minimise the safety concerns and risks posed by the perpetrator whilst working alongside the survivor and considering their views, opinion, what they want to happen and the best way to manage risk. We will explore options safely including:

- Looking at alternative housing arrangements for the perpetrator
- Exploring civil and criminal options (including injunctions, domestic abuse protection notices/orders) to give the survivor space to think and take action
- Ensuring perpetrators are solely accountable for any damages, arrears and anti-social behaviour that they have caused
- Signpost perpetrators to agencies who can offer them support if they acknowledge their behaviour, want to change and consent to a referral being made.

- Consider taking action against any customer who breaches their tenancy agreement as a result of committing domestic abuse. This may manifest itself as neighbours reporting antisocial behaviour of shouting, swearing, arguing, loud noise etc. This will be subject to our related tenancy and enforcement policies.
- When applying for housing with the Council all residents are asked if they have any unspent criminal convictions, this may affect their chances of being rehoused.

We understand not every survivor will want to end their relationship or will want us to take enforcement action against the perpetrator. We will, therefore, manage risk and ensure that as many safeguards are in place as possible.

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4 Policy Compliance

4.1 Policy Review

The policy will be reviewed by the Safeguarding lead every three years or if there are significant changes in legislation or local policy, to ensure that it is effective and identify any changes that need to be made.

We value the views of our residents and we will listen to feedback and use it to improve the way in which we work when dealing with domestic abuse and reviewing policies and procedures.

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