



Domestic Abuse Policy

Introduction

1. Our mission is to improve the quality of life for our residents.

We are committed to promoting a safe and secure environment where residents are able to live peacefully in their homes and communities.

Domestic abuse is very common and can ruin lives. Domestic abuse is a wider term and domestic violence is an aspect of this.

Domestic violence can happen between two people who are or were intimate partners or family members, regardless of their gender or sexuality. It can happen between people of different ages. The Government's definition of domestic violence is:

"any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality".

Purpose

2. To take effective action on each reported case using a victim centred approach. We will work with support agencies to provide appropriate guidance and help for victims. Key to this is being sensitive to all reported incidents in dealing with victims of abuse and having a procedure to ensure fair and consistent treatment.

Scope

3. Domestic violence is unacceptable and we will not tolerate this in any form. Abuse and violence in relationships is an abuse of power as well as likely to be a criminal offence.

The tenancy and Community Contracts (good neighbour agreements) set the framework of options available to deal effectively with reported incidents of domestic abuse. This includes partnership working with the police and a range of agencies, whilst not asking victims for proof of abuse.

All staff have a responsibility in reporting all identified or suspected incidents. Where there are breaches of the tenancy, legal action will be taken to stop and prevent further incidents.

Policy

4. To achieve this we will:

1. Use the Government's definition of domestic violence which now includes incidents of forced marriages, honour killings and female genital mutilation.
2. provide information to residents on what domestic abuse is and how to contact us, the police or other agencies for help, as well as providing female staff for victims if requested.
3. Deal with each reported case in line with our service standards to conduct a full assessment within 24 hours of a reported incident.
4. respect the need for confidentiality at all times, in the interests of safeguarding victims and their families. This specifically means not to pass messages to the victim from the perpetrator.
5. Set out an action plan for each reported incident and communicate with you regularly providing updates on progress.
6. For Starter Tenancies, any breaches will automatically result in extending the probationary period by six months or in the termination of the tenancy. This will be subject to approval by the Senior Management Team.
7. Train staff to deal with all domestic abuse and to take enforcement action on tenancy breaches.
8. Process all repairs which compromise the health and safety of the victim and other residents reported as domestic violence as an emergency. Other forms of support will be also considered such as arranging floating support, community and personal alarms.

9. Individuals will be advised to seek legal advice and speak with the Local Authority in respect of their position under homeless legislation. We will also explore other options on their behalf including such as a out of borough move, mutual exchange and internal transfer.

Responsibility

5. The board will provide leadership to ensure the policy is successful. Staff have individual and collective responsibility to implement the policy.

Monitoring, Review & Evaluation

6. The Head of Housing Services Board will oversee the implementation of this policy and do a quarterly review of all cases. Both the Senior Management Team and the board will be updated on a periodic basis.

This policy will be reviewed every three years.