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## **Domestic Abuse Policy**

**SER-POL-33**

**Version 6.0**

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**Date approved: 25/02/2026**

**Approved by: Customer Voice Committee**

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This policy sets out how we will respond to and safely manage disclosures of domestic abuse from our tenants and their households. It provides a definition of domestic abuse, coercive control, and stalking.
- 1.2 We aim to provide support, guidance, and advice to survivors of domestic abuse, to enable them to live safely at home, working with other agencies. We will do this by adopting a non-victim blaming and trauma informed, strengths-based approach.
- 1.3 We will refer to and collaborate with other agencies, including local authorities and the Police, to support survivors and hold perpetrators of domestic abuse to account.
- 1.4 In August 2018 we signed up to Make a Stand, the Chartered Institute of Housing's pledge to tackle domestic abuse to:
  - Make information about support services available on our website and other places
  - Put in place a policy to support members of staff
  - Appoint a champion at a senior level in the organisation.
- 1.5 This policy and the accompanying procedure will ensure staff have the right training and learning. We will also provide clear guidelines to follow when responding to reports of domestic abuse, which reflect best practice.
- 1.6 We recognise that other statutory and voluntary agencies may be better placed to respond to domestic violence and abuse and our actions will be taken in partnership as part of a coordinated response to ensure the safety of the survivor.
- 1.7 Domestic abuse affects individuals across all demographics; although anyone can be affected by domestic abuse; women are more often affected than men.

## **2. Relevant Legislation and Regulation**

- 2.1 We have a legal requirement under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to respond to reports of domestic abuse as a member of the local community safety partnership.
- 2.2 We have adopted the extended definition of domestic abuse and violence set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, contained in the Glossary.
- 2.3 The Domestic Abuse Act protects survivors moving because of domestic abuse from being disadvantaged by receiving shorter or less secure tenancies solely because they had to flee abuse. Our approach to transferring tenants is included in our Tenancy Policy.
- 2.4 The Regulator of Social Housing's Neighbourhood and Community Standards require that:

Registered providers must work co-operatively with other agencies tackling domestic abuse and enable tenants to access appropriate support and advice.

2.5 Adults with care and support needs and children at risk of abuse and neglect are more likely to be affected by Domestic Abuse and Violence. In these cases, we will also refer to our Safeguarding Policy.

## **3. Our Approach**

- 3.1 When applying this policy, Southway will do so in line with our REACH values; we will be:

**Respectful and Compassionate** - providing support, advice, and assistance.

**Equitable and Honest** - providing clear and timely communication and will be accountable for our decisions.

- 3.2 We will be empathetic, adopting a non-victim blaming and trauma informed approach. We will empower survivors using a strengths-based approach.

### **Responding to Disclosures**

- 3.3 This policy is supported by a Domestic Abuse Support Procedure, and we will use a Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Toolkit to respond to and safely manage disclosures of domestic abuse.

- 3.4 When responding to a domestic abuse disclosure Officers will assess whether there is an immediate danger and, if so, contact the Police using 999. In addition, Officers can assist with contacting Manchester Women's Aid and / or the National Domestic Violence Helpline (0808 2000 247) to secure a place of safety.
- 3.5 We will have well trained and competent staff who provide an effective service and a sensitive response to reports of domestic abuse and violence.
- 3.6 Our Domestic Abuse Support Coordinator can provide practical advice around target hardening, safety planning, legal remedies, and specialist support agencies.
- 3.7 We also have volunteers from within the organisation who are Domestic Abuse Support Champions. Their role is to raise awareness about domestic abuse within the organisation, they will be trained to recognise the signs of domestic abuse, to deal appropriately with disclosures and signpost people to get the help they need.
- 3.8 We will provide a safe environment where survivors are encouraged to talk and are listened to. Reports can be made at our offices or in a safe venue of their choice. Survivors will be given the opportunity to ask for a staff member of the same gender to deal with their case. Officers will agree a contact method and a timescale for keeping in touch.
- 3.9 Officers will respect confidentiality and only divulge information with the consent of the person concerned. The only exception to this would be if when it is necessary to safeguard survivors or their family.

#### **Early Intervention and Support**

- 3.10 As early as possible we will complete a Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour based risk identification checklist (DASH) and agree an action plan. Officers will provide safety planning advice and practical support.
- 3.11 As part of a coordinated response to risk management, Officers will provide:
- Support and advice, including guidance on safety and housing options
  - Benefits and money advice, helping residents access financial support
  - Referrals to specialist support agencies, with consent and based on need

- Aftercare support to ensure ongoing safety and access to longer-term services
- 3.12 When survivors are referred to the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), we share information and ensure that all actions assigned to us are prioritised and completed.
- 3.13 If the survivor wishes to stay in their current home, Officers will provide support including but not limited to
- Safety planning
  - Target hardening
  - A sanctuary scheme
  - Taking legal action against the perpetrator.
- 3.14 If the survivor requires a move, we will work closely with partner agencies to assist in securing temporary or alternative accommodation through rehousing, in line with Manchester's Allocation Policy. Survivors can be rehoused in the area they currently live in if there is sufficient legal protection in place to prevent further incidents occurring.

### **Holding the Perpetrator to Account Including Legal Action and Enforcement**

- 3.15 We have a role to play in holding perpetrators of domestic abuse to account as part of the wider Coordinated Community response, working in partnership with other agencies, neighbours, and the victim.
- 3.16 Legal action against the perpetrator or to end a joint tenancy will be taken on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the survivor and partner agencies.
- 3.17 Actions we can take to disrupt, challenge, and change a perpetrator's behaviour can include informal approaches and support as well as legal action and includes, but is not limited to:
- An injunction against the perpetrator
  - An application for possession of a perpetrator's property
  - Either placing on the Rehousing Review List or providing support to move as part of a planned behaviour change intervention
  - Visits in response to concerns for welfare

- Visits to discuss possible other tenancy breaches such as unauthorised or undeclared occupiers or rent arrears
- Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and Tenancy Warnings
- Referrals to support to perpetrator programmes.
- Working in partnership to manage other legal orders such as Domestic Violence Protection Orders or probation exclusion orders.

3.18 Our Domestic Abuse Support Coordinator will provide advice and support to survivors who chose to use other civil and criminal laws to protect them and their families and prevent further incidents.

#### **4. Partnership Working and Consultation**

4.1 We will collaborate with other agencies, including Local Authorities, Greater Manchester Police, and specialist agencies in providing a Coordinated Community Response which brings services together to keep survivors safe, hold abusers to account and prevent domestic abuse.

4.2 We have consulted with the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance, Equality and Diversity UK and service users when developing and reviewing this Policy.

#### **5. Staff Training and Continuous Improvement**

5.1 We will ensure that we have sufficient staff in place to respond effectively to reports of domestic violence and abuse within one working day and in emergencies.

5.2 We have a Domestic Abuse Support Procedure which includes the Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Toolkit. The procedure will state which staff members have responsibility for:

- Receiving and responding to reports.
- Case management – enforcement and holding the perpetrator to account.
- Case management - providing support.

5.3 Staff directly involved in the delivery of the service will be provided with domestic abuse and safeguarding training.

- 5.4 Cases and incidents will be reviewed and monitored on a quarterly basis, and we will collect satisfaction feedback about the way cases have been handled to enable lessons learned and improve performance.

## **6. Equality and Diversity**

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed to ensure that all appropriate actions are put in place to support those tenants who have protected characteristics.
- 6.2 In responding to disclosures, we aim to deliver support and services that are inclusive and diverse, understanding of the impact of intersectionality - the way that multiple forms of discrimination combine or overlap. We will take steps to address discrimination and inequality in access to support and services by identifying and working in partnership with culturally specific and specialist services.
- 6.3 We recognise that men can be victims of domestic abuse, as well as members of the LGBT+ community and people who are neurodivergent. We will provide support that considers people's individual circumstances and if we are not best placed to provide that support, we will refer to specialist agencies and services.
- 6.4 We want to hear the voices of and actively integrate all minoritised groups in our communities. In delivering our support services we aim to actively involve service users, consult experts, and make cultural and other adaptations to service delivery, promoting and advocating for transformation change, where we recognise discrimination and inequality.
- 6.5 This Policy is available on our website.

## **7. Related Policy Documents**

- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Procedure
- Employee Domestic Abuse Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Responsive Repairs Policy
- Tenancy Support Policy
- Hate Crime Policy and Procedure

- Equality Scheme
- Manchester Allocation Scheme
- Southway Tenancy Agreement

## **Glossary**

**Domestic Abuse** is 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 (see subsection (4));

(e) psychological, emotional, or other abuse; and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

**Economic abuse** means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B’s ability to—

(a) acquire, use, or maintain money or other property, or

(b) obtain goods or services.

**Children** are legally recognised as victims of domestic abuse if they see, hear or experience the effects of abuse.

For example, A’s behaviour may be behaviour “towards” B even though it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B’s child).

**Controlling behaviour** is defined as an act 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 or regulating their everyday behaviour.

**Coercive behaviour** is defined as acts of assault, threat, humiliation, intimidation, or other abuse that are used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

**Culturally Specific forms of Harm** Home Office guidance includes abuse which impacts upon black and minority ethnic (BME) women. This can include, but is not limited to, **forced marriage, dowry related abuse, honour crime, and female genital mutilation.**

**Stalking** is defined as a course of conduct which is defined in the (Protection from Harassment Act 1997). The Trust's response to reports of stalking behaviour will be, on a case-by-case basis, either in line with this policy or the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

**Non-Victim Blaming** – professionals should acknowledge the victim's feelings and experiences and the trauma they have endured, using sensitive language that is respectful and supportive.

**Trauma Informed** – an approach that recognises the impact of trauma on individuals lives and understands the effect on a person's neurological, psychological, and social development.

**Strengths Based** - focuses on identifying and enhancing individuals' strengths and capabilities.

**Coordinated Community Response** - a collaborative approach that brings together various community partners to effectively address issues like domestic abuse and violence.

**Target Hardening** - the process of strengthening security to the home and individuals to protect against personal attack or criminal activities, such as a fireguard to letter boxes to prevent arson attacks/

**Safety Planning** – a personalised plan to enhance safety in situations of risk.

**A sanctuary scheme** – a victim centred initiative that helps individuals remain safely in their own home such as changing locks and strengthening doors, can include provision of a safe (panic) room.

**Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference** – local meetings are where various agencies collaborate to protect individuals at high risk of harm or homicide due to domestic abuse.

**Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour based risk identification checklist (DASH)** – a structured set list of questions designed to guide a

conversation with a victim, ensuring safety planning and offender risk management.

**Rehousing Review List** – applies to Manchester City Council’s rehousing scheme - a list of people who may not qualify for rehousing under the council’s and Manchester Move partners allocation schemes.

**Acceptable Behaviour Contracts** – a voluntary written agreement aimed at addressing anti-social behaviour by encouraging people to take responsibility for their actions.

**Tenancy Warnings** – written reminders of the terms of the tenancy agreement

**Domestic Violence Protection Orders** – are civil orders designed to provide immediate protection to victims.

**Probation exclusion orders** – legal measures that restrict an individual’s ability to engage in certain activities while in probation.

| <b>POLICY REVIEW HISTORY</b>  |  |
|---|--|
| <i>To be completed during each review</i>   |  |
| <b>Previous versions</b><br>(version number – approved by – approval date – title if different) |  |
| v1 – Shadow Board – 17/07/2007 (later incorporated into the ASB Policy)                         |  |
| v2 – Board – 18/03/2014 – Domestic Abuse Policy   |  |
| v3 – Board 21/02/2017 – Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy                                      |  |
| v4 – People and Places Committee – Feb 2020   |  |
| V5 –People and Places Committee 7 February 2023   |  |
| V6 – Customer Voice Committee 25 February 2026  |  |
| <b>Date of last EIA:</b>  | 18/01/2022   |
| <b>Review lead by:</b>  | Claire Davies – Head of Housing Management and Support |

**Main points or amendments made and reasons**

As part of our work towards achieving Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Accreditation, this policy has been reviewed in line with recommendations to:

- Strengthen reference to collaborative working
- Added a statement of the gendered nature of abuse
- Moved definitions to the glossary
- Added in about granting of tenancies in line with Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Added in our REACH values in applying this policy
- Added in the role of the DA Support Coordinator and Champions
- Expanded on support provided to include reference to aftercare
- Added in consultation

**Next review due:**

**Q4 2028/29**

**Review Level:**

**Customer Voice Committee**