Domestic Abuse Policy

Policy Owner	Paul Seymour, Executive Director Customers and Communities
Approval Level	Customer Experience Committee
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We want everyone to be able to access and understand this policy. If you need this information in another language or format, such as large print, audio, Braille, or Easy Read, please contact us and we will support you.	

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1. What this policy is for

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to set out Southway Wythenshawe Homes's approach to preventing, identifying, and responding to domestic abuse, and how we will support customers and members of their households who are affected.

1.2 As a social landlord, Southway Wythenshawe Homes has an important role in tackling domestic abuse. We understand that domestic abuse can affect every part of someone's life, including their safety, wellbeing, and ability to feel secure in their home and to sustain their tenancy.

1.3 We will respond promptly using a trauma-informed, victim/survivor-centred approach, which is a way of working that recognises the impact of trauma and prioritises safety, trust, collaboration, choice, and empowerment.

1.4 We will support safe and sustainable housing outcomes, meet our safeguarding responsibilities and, where appropriate, take action to hold perpetrators to account.

1.5 For the purposes of this policy, Southway Wythenshawe Homes defines Domestic Abuse as:

Any incident or pattern of abusive behaviour between people aged 16 or over who are personally connected. Abuse may be physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, economic, or controlling in nature. It can include coercive and threatening behaviour.

2. Who this policy applies to

Customers and household members	People experiencing, or at risk of, or affected by domestic abuse including children recognised as victims/survivors in their own right.

Applicants and residents seeking a housing option	People experiencing, at risk of, or affected by domestic abuse, including children recognised as victims/survivors in their own right.
Colleagues, contractors, and volunteers	People who may need safe advice, rehousing, temporary accommodation, sanctuary measures, or support to remain safe.
Perpetrators or people causing harm	An individual aged 16 or over who carries out abusive behavior against another person to whom they are personally connected

3. Regulation and Legal Requirements

3.1 This policy supports compliance with the following regulations and legal requirements and our commitment against DAHA accreditation and membership.

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Regulator of Social Housing standards
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Care Act 2014 and Children Acts 1989 and 2004
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
- Housing, homelessness, and tenancy legislation
- Family Law Act 1996 and Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Chartered Institute of Housing Make a Stand Campaign

4. What we will do

Our principles

4.1 We will provide a safe and confidential environment for discussions and, where reasonably practicable, take account of individual preferences to minimize any danger to them.

4.2 We recognise that domestic abuse disproportionately affects women, although it can affect anyone.

4.3 We understand that support may be needed after someone first tells us about domestic abuse. In some circumstances, we may provide ongoing aftercare, advice and signposting to help victims/survivors maintain their safety, wellbeing, and housing stability. This reflects feedback from customers on the importance of ongoing support following an initial disclosure.

4.4 We recognise that domestic abuse can have a significant impact on children and young people. Children who see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse are recognised as victims in their own right. Where appropriate, we can help residents access support and specialist services to promote children's safety, wellbeing and recovery and hear the voice of the child.

4.5 Southway Wythenshawe Homes subscribes to and supports the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance's (DAHA) values and principles, which guide our approach to preventing, identifying, and responding to domestic abuse in a safe, trauma-informed and person-centred way. You can read more about these values in Appendix 1.

Language and Terminology

4.6 We will use the term 'victim/survivor' in this policy. This recognises the language of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which uses the term 'victim' while acknowledging that people may choose different terms to describe their experience.

Reporting and support

4.7 We will make safe contact with the victim/survivor within one working day. When we receive a direct disclosure of domestic abuse, we will agree with you how and when we can contact you safely. We will take account of your preferred communication method, whether it is safe to leave messages, and

any risks associated with contacting you, to help ensure our contact does not increase the risk of harm

4.8 Where there is an immediate risk to life or safety, we will contact the emergency services and take urgent action as required.

4.9 Domestic abuse can be reported through any Southway Wythenshawe Homes service channel, the person experiencing abuse or by someone acting on their behalf. Any colleague receiving a disclosure or concern is responsible for ensuring it is responded to appropriately.

Channels are:

- Telephone
- Email
- Website
- Online forms
- Customer portal
- Customer app
- Face-to-face customer service / reception / operatives
- Community hubs
- Drop-in sessions
- Written correspondence / post
- Contractors

4.8 We will offer a safe and confidential environment for discussions and, where reasonably practicable, will take account of individual preferences, including the location of meetings and the gender of the colleague providing support.

4.9 We recognise that support may be needed beyond the immediate crisis. Where appropriate, we will provide ongoing aftercare and signposting to help victims/survivors maintain their safety, wellbeing and housing stability.

4.10 The inclusion of aftercare also reflects feedback received from customers, who highlighted the importance of ongoing support following the initial response.

Risk assessment and safety planning

4.11 Southway Wythenshawe Homes commits to completing a Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence (DASH) risk identification checklist, as early as possible and agreeing an action plan. Support may include advocacy, referrals to specialist services, benefits and money advice, target hardening and sanctuary measures.

4.12 Where the threshold is met, high-risk cases will be referred to Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), which is a meeting where agencies share information and coordinate support for victims/survivors at high risk of serious harm. We will participate in MARAC and complete any agreed housing-related actions.

4.13 We will maintain accurate and secure records of domestic abuse cases on our case management system. Cases referred to MARAC will be clearly flagged to support consistent case management and effective risk management.

Housing options and safe accommodation

4.14 We will support victims/survivors to remain safely in their home where this is their preferred option and risks can be managed appropriately.

4.15 This may include safety planning, target hardening measures, sanctuary schemes and legal action against the perpetrator.

4.16 Where remaining in the home is not safe or appropriate, we will work with customers to explore rehousing or alternative accommodation options in line with our Allocations Policy and homelessness responsibilities.

4.17 Where a customer needs to move because of domestic abuse, Southway Wythenshawe Homes will seek to ensure that they are not disadvantaged in

relation to the security of their tenancy solely because they have experienced domestic abuse.

4.18 We recognise that domestic abuse can lead to financial hardship and disruption. We will signpost customers to relevant support services and, where appropriate, provide access to practical assistance such as food, fuel and essential household items.

Holding Perpetrators to Account

4.19 We will work with partner agencies to hold perpetrators of domestic abuse to account and reduce the risk of harm.

4.20 We may use a range of proportionate interventions, including tenancy action, legal remedies and partnership work. Decisions about tenancy action will be made on a case-by-case basis, taking account of risk, the views of the victim/survivor and advice from partner agencies.

4.21 Where appropriate, we will support perpetrators to access specialist behaviour change services and support victims/survivors to access legal protections and safety measures.

4.22 We will work with relevant multi-agency arrangements, including MARAC, MATAC and MAPPA (which are explained further in the 'glossary'), where this helps to manage risk and protect those affected.

5. Confidentiality, information sharing and records

5.1 We will respect and protect the confidentiality of domestic abuse disclosures and handle information in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

5.2 We will only share information where:

- the customer has given consent; or
- there is a risk of serious harm to the customer, a child, or another person.

5.3 We recognise that sharing information about domestic abuse may, in some circumstances, increase the risk of harm. Before sharing information, we will consider any potential risks to the victim/survivor, children or others, and take reasonable steps to ensure information is shared safely, proportionately and only where necessary.

5.4 Where possible, we will tell the customer what information is being shared and why, unless doing so could increase the risk of harm or it is not possible to contact them.

5.5 Any information shared without consent will be limited to what is necessary to protect safety, recorded appropriately, and discussed with the relevant manager or safeguarding lead.

5.6 Where concerns meet safeguarding thresholds under the Care Act 2014 or Children Acts 1989 and 2004, we may share information with safeguarding services, MARAC or other relevant agencies to help protect those at risk. Please see our Safeguarding Policy for further information on our approach to Safeguarding.

6. Training, Awareness and Culture

6.1 We will ensure colleagues receive training and development appropriate to their role and responsibilities.

6.2 We will follow agreed procedures, guidance and toolkits to ensure a consistent and effective response to domestic abuse.

6.3 We will appoint Domestic Abuse Champions to raise awareness, share good practice and support colleagues to respond appropriately to disclosures.

7. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was completed on 24th August 2026. The actions from this are:

Action	Policy Change
Improve accessibility and inclusion	Commitment to provide accessible, trauma-informed services, reasonable adjustments and specialist referrals where appropriate.
Reduce barriers to support	Recognition of the differing needs of customers with protected characteristics and commitment to safe, inclusive and person-centred support.
Promote safety and housing stability	Enhanced focus on safety planning, rehousing options, practical assistance, aftercare and ongoing support following disclosure.

7.2 We are committed to providing a fair and accessible service for all customers.

7.3 We will consider individual circumstances, support needs and protected characteristics when supporting domestic abuse survivors.

7.4 We will provide information in accessible formats and make reasonable adjustments where appropriate.

8. Who is responsible

8.1 The people responsible for overseeing this policy are listed below.

Officer	Responsibility
Executive Director of Customers and Communities	Policy owner
Executive Director of Customers and Communities and Assistant Director Customers and Communities	Strategic oversight
Head of Housing Management and Support and Head of Community Development & Support	Operational delivery and policy implementation
Head of Housing Management and Support and Living Well Manager	Day-to-day service management and assurance

9. Monitoring and Reporting

9.1 The Domestic Abuse policy will be reviewed by our Customer Experience Committee every three years. Southway Wythenshawe Homes's Customer Experience Committee will receive an annual update on how the policy is being delivered.

9.2 This will include reporting on:

- domestic abuse activity, trends and outcome
- timeliness of responses and support provided;
- customer feedback
- equality, diversity and inclusion considerations; and
- learning from reviews.

9.3 The next review date for this policy is shown on the cover sheet.

10. Glossary

The glossary contains words that are not in the main document. This is to support broad understanding of the issue.

Word	Definition
DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance)	A specialist organisation that supports housing providers to improve their response to domestic abuse through accreditation, standards, training and good practice. Southway Wythenshawe Homes subscribes to DAHA's values and principles to help ensure a safe, consistent and victim/survivor-centred response to domestic abuse.
DASH Risk Assessment	The Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment (DASH) Risk Assessment is a nationally recognised tool used to identify the level of risk and inform safety planning and referrals.
High Risk	A level of risk indicates that a victim/survivor may be at significant risk of serious harm or homicide and may require specialist multi-agency intervention.

Information Sharing	The lawful and proportionate exchange of information to safeguard individuals and prevent harm.
MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements)	A statutory multi-agency framework used to assess and manage individuals who pose a risk of serious harm to the public, ensuring agencies work together to protect victims/survivors and communities.
MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference)	A multi-agency meeting where agencies share information and coordinate support for victims/survivors at high risk of serious harm
MATAC (Multi-Agency Tasking and Action Conference)	A multi-agency meeting that brings together organisations to share information and coordinate actions to manage high-risk domestic abuse perpetrators, reduce harm and improve victim/survivor safety.
Perpetrator	An individual aged 16 or over who carries out abusive behaviour against another person to whom they are personally connected.
Personally Connected	Individuals who are or have been partners, spouses, civil partners, relatives, or who share parental responsibility for a child.
Safety Planning	Working with a victim/survivor to identify practical measures that reduce risk and improve safety.
Sanctuary Scheme	Security measures provided to help a victim/survivor remain safely in their home where appropriate.
'Honour'-Based Abuse	Abuse committed to protect or defend perceived family, community or cultural honour.
Stalking	Repeated and unwanted behaviour that causes fear, alarm, or distress.
Target Hardening	Practical security measures used to improve safety in a home, such as stronger locks, alarms, lighting, or other improvements.
Victim/Survivor	A person who has experienced domestic abuse. Individuals may choose the term that best reflects their experience.

Appendix 1 - Southway Wythenshawe Homes and DAHA values, principles, and purpose.

DAHA Values and Principles:

Integrity: We expect local authorities and housing providers to undertake DAHA accreditation because it is the right thing to do for their residents, tenants, and staff. The organisation's intention should be to increase victim/survivor safety and housing security and hold perpetrators to account for their harm. This should be reflected in all interactions with tenants, residents, and staff, stakeholders, and the public. It should be the basis for all decision making regarding the support offered to individuals experiencing domestic abuse and those causing harm.

Collaboration: Internal and external collaboration should be at the heart of organisations' domestic abuse response. Specialist domestic abuse services, including ensuring by and for services for Black and minoritised victims/survivors are valued for their independence, expertise and specialisms and recognised as partners and collaborators. We expect local authorities and housing providers to demonstrate true collaboration with all agencies and professionals who have a role to play in the Coordinated Community Response to domestic abuse both at a strategic and operational level, and through multiagency information sharing and coordination forums. This means they should seek out their partner agencies, develop meaningful relationship and referral pathways, and participate in relevant governance boards. We expect local authorities and housing providers to demonstrate true collaboration with victims/survivors of domestic abuse, recognising them as the experts of their experiences and their needs to access support and housing security. Any interaction with residents/tenants and staff must demonstrate belief and actions must reflect that victims/survivors have been heard. Survivors/victims should be meaningfully included in the development, delivery, and evaluation of your services, based on their desired participation.

Empathy: Empathy should be present in every decision that might impact the welfare of staff and residents/tenants experiencing domestic abuse. It is crucial to

seek the full context of someone's situation in a safe and appropriate way that does not require them to repeat their story unreasonably and unnecessarily relive their experiences and risk re-traumatisation. You will be flexible in your response to meet their needs. Empathy enables staff to respond to tenants, residents and other staff with belief, non-judgement, and to offer person-centred support. Empathy is built by being able to fully consider someone's experience of abuse and the barriers that they must overcome to seek support – i.e., an intersectional approach. To build this understanding, staff must regularly access training that allows them to understand the dynamics and impact of domestic abuse on victims/survivors, including the impact of trauma and how this effects victims/survivors' support needs. Through a victim/survivor-led and needs led approach, that is flexible to meet the individual needs of each victim/survivor, your organisation will provide opportunities for empathy in practice that meets the intersecting needs of victims/survivors and those causing harm.

Empowerment: Your tenants, residents, and staff know what they need and should always be listened to and empowered to feel safe to make decisions about their safety and housing security. All decisions and outcomes should be based on victims/survivors' needs and wishes and should be created in collaboration with victims/survivors rather than done to victims/survivors. Empowerment is not just about making decisions regarding their own support and safety, but to also have the power to influence how services that impact victims/survivors are developed, delivered, and evaluated.

Respect: Your organisation should have a culture of respect, both internally and externally, where people are free to express their needs. Respect is one of the foundational elements of a non-judgemental, believing and needs-led approach. Respect should be present in every contact with residents/tenants/staff, in case notes and referral language, and decisions regarding how to support victims/survivors of domestic abuse

Accountability: Housing providers and local authorities must act with accountability and humility in their roles, both towards employees and residents/staff, and be

transparent about the limitations of their knowledge and support. This includes being transparent about mistakes and gaps in service provision if future victims/survivors are to have more positive outcomes. It also means showing humility and taking accountability when gaps or mistakes lead to harm, demonstrating changes to prevent any future harm. Accountability also means local authorities and housing providers hold perpetrators of abuse to account for their behaviour, and to never blame the victim/survivor for the abuse they have endured. It also recognises that accountability lies with professionals and organisations to engage and support victims/survivors, and it is not the responsibility of victims/survivors to engage services and support.

DAHA Principles:

Non-judgement: Creating an enabling environment where victim/survivors know they will be listened to. Housing providers can achieve this by allowing victim/survivors to disclose abuse without judgment, and by reassuring them that they will be believed, listened to, and heard.

Being person-centred: How the work is done is as important as what is done. Housing providers will work with empathy, integrity, and transparency. Housing providers are committed to empowering their staff to build knowledge, skills, and confidence to identify and respond to domestic abuse in the most appropriate way that puts the victim/survivor at the heart of the intervention and support.

Amplifying victim/survivor voices: Valuing feedback from people with lived experience of domestic abuse. Housing providers seek to learn from victim/survivors, both staff and tenants, and work to amplify their voices to inform our development and improvement of practice.

Intersectionality: Domestic abuse is different for everyone and will never be all of one person's experience. Housing providers recognise that they may be face barriers related to their identity such as race, gender, age, sexuality, faith, disability, and marital status. Housing providers will take an intersectional approach that recognises a person's unique experience.

Safety: Creating safe homes and communities where perpetrators are held to account for their behaviour. Housing providers recognise that the safety of those who are experiencing domestic abuse is paramount and that safe intervention starts by talking to them and asking them what they need and want to happen.

Working towards a Coordinated Community Response (CCR): Committing to working together to end domestic abuse. Housing providers will be part of a coordinated community response to domestic abuse by working collaboratively with local agencies to share information and to meet the needs of the individuals and families experiencing domestic abuse. Housing providers will communicate and build meaningful relationships with tenants, with colleagues and with those who have specialist knowledge, experience, and powers to act to support housing providers to keep victim/survivors and their families safe and well.

Appendix 2: Definitions

Word	Definition
Abuse relating to faith	Using religion, spiritual beliefs or faith practices to control, frighten, isolate or harm someone.
Abuse through others	Using children, relatives, friends or other people to threaten, monitor, punish or control someone.
Controlling behaviour	Acts designed to make someone dependent by isolating them or restricting their independence and everyday life.
Coercive behaviour	A pattern of threats, humiliation, intimidation or other abuse used to harm, punish or frighten someone.
Disabilty related abuse	Abuse, neglect or exploitation that is targeted at a person because of their disability, or that takes advantage of their disability, impairment, communication needs or reliance on support from others.
Domestic Abuse	Domestic abuse is defined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 as “abusive behaviour between two people aged 16 years or above that are personally connected to each other, regardless of whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct (pattern of behaviour)”.
Economic abuse	Behaviour that limits a person’s ability to obtain, use or keep money, property, goods or services.
Emotional abuse	Behaviour such as humiliation, manipulation, blame or intimidation that causes emotional harm.
Financial abuse	Controlling, exploiting or misusing another person’s income, benefits, savings, assets or debts.
Forced marriage	A marriage where one or both people have not freely consented and pressure, threats or abuse are used.
Harassment	Unwanted conduct that intimidates, threatens or causes distress.
Image-based abuse	Sharing, threatening to share or misusing private images without consent.
Physical abuse	Using physical force to hurt, injure, frighten or control someone.
Psychological abuse	Behaviour that damages a person’s confidence, independence or mental wellbeing.
Sexual abuse	Any sexual behaviour imposed without a person’s free agreement.
So-called ‘honour’-based abuse	Abuse committed to protect or defend perceived family, community or cultural honour.
Stalking	Repeated, unwanted behaviour that causes fear, alarm or distress.

Technology-facilitated abuse	Using phones, social media, tracking devices, smart technology or digital platforms to monitor, control or harass someone.
Verbal abuse	Using words, insults, threats or degrading language to frighten, humiliate or control someone.
Violent or threatening behaviour	Violence, or threats of violence or harm, used to frighten or control someone.

Appendix 3 Approach to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

Making Support Accessible to Everyone

We are committed to ensuring that all residents can access support if they are experiencing domestic abuse. We will work with you to understand your individual needs and make reasonable adjustments where required.

Communication and Information

We can provide information in a range of formats to help make our services more accessible. This may include:

- Large print, easy-read or translated information.
- Access to interpreters, including British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters where required.
- Support to communicate in a way that is safe and accessible for you.
- Adjustments for people with sensory impairments, learning disabilities or neurodivergence.

Personalised Support

We recognise that people experience domestic abuse differently and may face different barriers to accessing support. We will take account of your individual circumstances and work with you to identify the support that best meets your needs.

This may include:

- Agreeing safe ways to communicate with you.
- Arranging meetings in accessible locations.
- Making reasonable adjustments for disabled residents.
- Supporting you to access specialist domestic abuse services, advocacy services or other organisations that can provide additional help.

Inclusive and Trauma-Informed Services

We are committed to providing a service that is respectful, inclusive and trauma-informed. We recognise that factors such as disability, age, ethnicity, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, caring responsibilities and immigration status can affect how people experience domestic abuse and access support.

We will work with specialist partners where appropriate to help ensure residents receive support that is responsive to their individual needs and circumstances.