

# DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Stockport Homes is committed to delivering the best possible services for people experiencing domestic abuse. Stockport Homes believes that no one should live in fear of domestic abuse and will take whatever steps possible to advise assist and support any person experiencing or being threatened with domestic abuse.
- 1.2 Stockport Homes recognises its critical role in the lives of customers and staff experiencing domestic abuse as both a housing provider and employer.

## 2 DEFINITION OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

- 2.1 Stockport Homes defines Domestic Abuse as:
  - ‘Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.’ This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:
  - 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 and regulating their everyday behaviour.
  - Coercive behaviour is<sup>1</sup> an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.
  - Physical abuse – hitting, punching, kicking, slapping, hitting with objects, pulling hair, pushing or shoving, cutting or stabbing, restraining, strangulation, choking, honour based violence, refusal to administer prescriptive medication
  - Sexual abuse – rape, coerced sex, forcing a person experiencing domestic abuse to take part in unwanted sexual acts, refusal to practice safe sex or use contraception, threatened or actual sexual abuse of children
  - Emotional abuse – creating isolation, using threats, putting a person down, humiliating, undermining them, verbal abuse, forced marriages
  - Financial Abuse – Controlling bank accounts or benefits, making a person experiencing domestic abuse account for all their spending, running up debts in a person’s name.

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<sup>1</sup> This definition of coercive behaviour, also includes so called ‘honour’ based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.

### 3 STRATEGIC LINKS

- 3.1 Stockport Homes is a member of the Safer Stockport Partnership (SSP) and plays a key role in the delivery of some of the Partnerships overarching priorities including how it will protect vulnerable people from domestic abuse.
- 3.2 Stockport Homes is also a member of the Greater Manchester Housing Providers Group and is signed up to the Domestic Abuse standard for providers which details how cases of Domestic Abuse will be handled.
- 3.3 Stockport Homes is a signatory of the Make A Stand<sup>2</sup> pledge which has been developed by the Chartered Institute of Housing in partnership with Women's Aid and the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance.
- 3.4 Stockport Homes recognises that confidentiality is fundamental to developing a relationship of trust with persons experiencing domestic abuse and guarantee that any information provided will be in the strictest of confidence. Stockport Homes will only share information where it is absolutely necessary and will only be exchanged in line with the Safer Stockport Partnership (SSP) protocols for exchange of information and relevant protocols for both child protection and vulnerable adults.
- 3.5 Stockport Homes will therefore seek to work in partnership with other agencies to ensure that the best possible individual and family support is developed, delivered and evaluated. Partners offering direct support to individuals affected by domestic abuse include but are not limited to:
- TPA Positive Relationships Team
  - Talk Listen Change
  - Stockport Without Abuse
  - Greater Manchester Police
- 3.6 In addition to being linked to the SSP priorities, Domestic Abuse Policy has clear links to many of Stockport Homes' strategies, policies and action plans, in particular:
- ASB Strategy 2016-19
  - ASB Policy
  - Hate Crimes Policy
  - Equality & Diversity Strategy & Action Plan
  - Homelessness Strategy 2016-21
  - Allocations Policy
  - Relationship breakdown Policy

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<sup>2</sup> The pledge ensures Stockport Homes' commitment to raising awareness and providing quality advice and support to tenants and staff experiencing or perpetrating domestic abuse. It also acts as a tool to maintain best practise and monitor performance.

- Safeguarding Children and Adults at risk Policy and Procedure

## 4 POLICY STATEMENT

4.1 Stockport Homes will be vigilant in recognising domestic abuse and take all reports of domestic abuse seriously and will seek to work with persons experiencing domestic abuse and deliver the best possible service and establish appropriate support and housing solutions. Stockport Homes will:

- Ensure that persons experiencing domestic abuse are given accurate and co-ordinated advice and support at the earliest possible time to assist them in making informed decisions of their options concerning safety and support
- Promote local and national domestic abuse services online, outlining what services they offer, and provide an online reporting tool on Stockport Homes' website to make it easier for victims to come forward
- Take a single risk management approach to cases of domestic abuse to ensure a shared understanding of risk between staff and partners
- Use legislative framework to ensure protection of persons experiencing domestic abuse to stop the abuse repeating.
- Prevent homelessness and enable persons experiencing domestic abuse and their children to remain safely in their home where possible
- Facilitating the implementation of increased security measures including a sanctuary scheme via the multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) process as detailed in the Domestic Abuse procedure
- Follow any relevant child protection/safeguarding procedures where it is believed a child is at risk due an abusive relationship.
- Provide a confidential service and will not exchange any information with any other agency without the persons written consent or unless safeguarding concerns for adults or children reach a level that requires further action (as per Stockport Homes Safeguarding Adults and Children Policy). In these circumstances information will be exchanged in order to prevent and detect crime and will be carried out in line with Safer Stockport Partnership information sharing protocol
- Meet any access needs of the person experiencing domestic abuse for example providing an interpreter or assisting those with poor literacy skills or disabilities
- Discuss the cultural needs of the person experiencing domestic abuse and obtain advice from partners and specialist agencies
- Provide a central reporting mechanism for instances of domestic abuse all across Stockport Homes' properties to ensure interventions can be effectively reviewed and performance managed

- Work in partnership with other agencies recognising the importance of dealing with domestic abuse in a multi-agency context
- Seek appropriate support solutions for perpetrators of abuse to amend their behaviour and prevent reoccurrence of abuse
- Ensure that all policies relate to everyone in the community and cover issues of gender, ethnicity, age, disability, sexuality and religious beliefs
- Ensure that relevant employees are given appropriate training and that training covers the impact of and our response to domestic abuse
- Provide support and guidance to employees experiencing or committing domestic abuse
- Not condone domestic abuse perpetrated by employees under any circumstances nor will it be treated as a purely personal matter, any reports of which will be investigated accordingly in line the Domestic Abuse procedure and advice sought from Human Resources

## **5 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment of this policy has been undertaken and no adverse impacts have been identified.
- 5.2 Any domestic abuse incident is given priority status for investigation. This is positive preferential treatment.
- 5.3 There is potential differential impact for disabled customers due possible vulnerability due to physical or mental health. This could include customers whose disability may means they have poor literacy. The policy is linked to the ASB Policy which negates this risk as it details support available to customers to complete incident diaries. Alternatives to diaries for customers with poor literacy skills are also provided as required including the use of voice recording technology.

## **6 OWNERSHIP, MONITORING & REVIEW**

- 6.1 The Domestic Abuse Policy is 'owned' by Directorate of Neighbourhoods and Support, but there is responsibility in each Directorate for the implementation of the policy.
- 6.2 The number of Domestic Abuse cases will be monitored quarterly and performance will be reported to the Partnership Delivery Group which is a multi-agency forum where all crime and ASB levels are closely monitored.