

Domestic Abuse Policy

Sheffield City Council Housing Service

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This Policy is also available as a shortened summary and in other languages. Please ask us if you need this translating into any other languages, including braille.

1. POLICY STATEMENT & SCOPE

This Policy aims to ensure that all Sheffield City Council tenants and residents of Sheffield understand what domestic abuse is and how Sheffield City Council Housing Service will respond to both victims/survivors and perpetrators of domestic abuse. This Policy therefore applies to all Sheffield City Council tenants and other residents of Sheffield.

Sheffield City Council Housing Service (here on referred to as 'Housing') recognises that domestic abuse is a serious issue that affects many tenants and residents in the city and is a major cause of homelessness. **In 2022/23, there were 18,358 known victims of domestic abuse in Sheffield** (Crime Survey of England and Wales 2022/23). We will not condone or tolerate domestic abuse and we will work to send clear messages to the community that action will be taken to support and protect victims/survivors. We will always work to ensure that our response is victim/survivor-centred, and we will, where appropriate, use our powers to deal with the perpetrator.

For specialist support and advice, call the Sheffield domestic abuse helpline on [0808 808 2241](tel:08088082241). If you are in immediate danger, you should always call the police on 999.

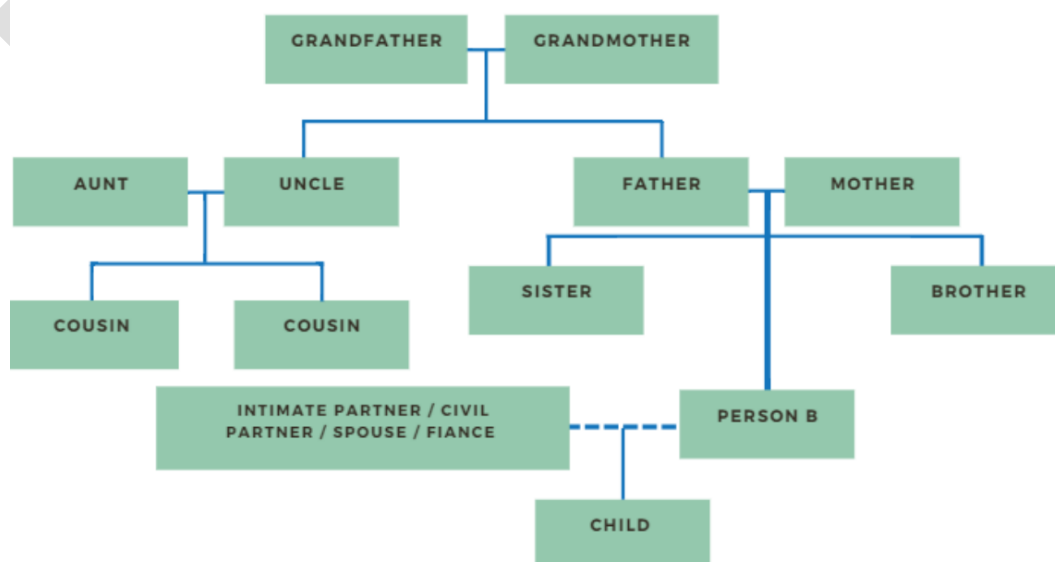
You can also report domestic abuse to us through any contact or communication you have with us, for example by telephone, email, in person or in writing. If you are a Council tenant, you can contact your

2. KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

The government defines domestic abuse as ‘any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality’.

The [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) statutory definition of domestic abuse states the behaviour of a person (A) towards another person (B) is domestic abuse if:

- **A and B are aged 16 or over**
- **A and B are personally connected to each other...**
 - They are, or have been, married to each other;
 - They are, or have been, civil partners of each other;
 - They have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
 - They have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
 - They are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other;
 - They each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship (either as a parent of the child or a person who has parental responsibility for the child) in relation to the same child (a person under 18 years old);
 - They are relatives.
 - Children aged under 18 are also recognised as victims if they see, hear, or experience the effects of the abuse or are related to the survivor or the perpetrator.



Any of the people on this family tree would qualify as being **personally connected** to Person B, making any abusive behaviour from one person to another domestic abuse. Abuse towards in-laws (whether by common law or marriage) is also domestic abuse.

• A's behaviour towards B is abusive...

[Abusive behaviour](#) includes:

- [Physical abuse](#) – slapping, pushing, kicking, stabbing, damage to property or important items, attempted murder or murder. This also includes non-fatal strangulation, or any act that affects the ability of a person to breathe.
- [Sexual abuse](#) – any non-consensual sexual activity including: rape, sexual assault, coercive sexual activity or refusing safe sex
- [Psychological and emotional abuse](#) – intimidation, social isolation, verbal abuse, humiliation, constant criticism or enforced trivial routines
- [Controlling or coercive behaviour](#) – using a pattern of behaviour over time to exert power and control, can be used to isolate and intimidate individuals
- [Economic/financial abuse](#) – controlling/withholding access to money or resources, stealing depriving or taking control of money, running up debts, withholding benefits or bank cards.
- [Digital/cyber abuse](#) – abusive behaviour via various forms of technology, demanding access to devices, controlling access, using technology to monitor an individual, sharing intimate images.
- [Forced marriage](#) – facing physical, emotional or psychological pressure to marry someone you don't want to e.g. being told that you will bring shame upon the family, threats to kill.
- [Female Genital Mutilation \(FGM\)](#) – cutting, piercing, removing or sewing closed any part of a girl's or woman's genitals with no medical reason.
- [So-called "honour" based abuse](#) – female genital mutilation, forced marriage, forced abortion, being denied your passport or other documentation (see more in section 4).
- [Stalking](#) – being followed, receiving unwanted communication or gifts, someone turning up uninvited to your home or place of work, someone monitoring your use of the internet or checking your phone.

Anyone can experience domestic abuse – adults of any age, sex, gender or sexual orientation. Both singular incidents and repeated patterns of behaviour can constitute domestic abuse, as well as acts and behaviour that occur after separation. A's behaviour 'towards' B can include conduct directed at another person, such as B's child, and if A threatens to harm themselves.

3. OUR COMMITMENTS

Domestic abuse disproportionately affects women and girls, however, everyone can be affected. We will assist victims/survivors irrespective of age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation (the protected characteristics defined within [the Equality Act 2010](#)). Further detail on this can be found in section 4.

Our approach will always be victim/survivor-centred and we will always consider the views of the victim/survivor as well as their ongoing safety. We will only ever speak to you about your experiences of domestic abuse when you are safe and alone.

Frontline staff will receive training which includes how to work within this Policy framework and how to deliver a safe and effective response to domestic abuse. Our staff will be provided with training to spot signs of domestic abuse when working in homes and having conversations with victims/survivors.

3.1. Legal Framework

Through this Policy the Council will ensure that it acts in accordance with all relevant legislation and regulations including:

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Housing Act 1996 Parts 6 and 7
- Housing Act 1985
- Housing Act 1988
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Care Act 2014
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Family Law Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Crime and Security Act 2010
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and the Regulator of Social Housing new Consumer Regulations
- Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) (Clare's Law)

The Council will also have regard to all relevant statutory guidance including:

- Domestic Abuse: Statutory Guidance
- Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities
- Allocation of accommodation guidance for local authorities
- Working together to safeguard children – statutory guidance on multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children
- Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) Statutory Guidance

3.2. What can victims/survivors expect from us?

3.2.1. When you first present to us:

- **Dignity and respect:** You can report domestic abuse through any interaction with our service, and we will always treat victims/survivors with respect and dignity. We will take all reports of domestic abuse seriously and handle any disclosures in a way that is non-judgmental and does not place the victim/survivor at greater risk.
- **Carrying out a risk assessment:** We will carry out a risk assessment using a Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence Risk Identification Checklist (DASH), which is a UK wide accredited form used by us and partner organisations to plan how we will support the victim/survivor and any children, and helps us to understand the levels of risk you may be experiencing.
- **Safety planning:** Your safety is of paramount importance to us, so we will always check with you if the ways to communicate with you are safe, and stick to an agreed method of contact. This includes talking to us over the phone, at our offices or another safe venue. We will also work with you and other services such as IDAS (Independent Domestic Abuse Services) to help you plan how to keep safe if you're preparing to leave your home or how to keep safe in your new property.
- **Signposting to support:** We will refer or signpost you to specialist domestic abuse agencies who will be able to support you.
- **Support to stay in your home (if you wish to stay):** We can help you to access target hardening tools (e.g. window and door locks, CCTV) via the 'Sanctuary Scheme'. We can also signpost you to specialist organisations who will be able to help you fully explore your legal options, such as occupation orders and non-molestation orders to help keep the perpetrator away from your home. You can read more about legal options [here](#).

3.2.2. Leaving your home in an emergency

If you need to leave your home immediately, regardless of whether you are a Council tenant or not, you can contact Housing Solutions to make a homeless application. From here, you will be able to reach a number of different options including: commissioned supported housing, temporary or emergency accommodation, applying to join the Housing Register. We also have a number of 'safe accommodation' options in Sheffield for those that have had to flee and are homeless. These consist of refuges and also dispersed accommodation across the city. These can also be accessed via Housing Solutions. If you're in immediate danger, you should always call the police on 999.

3.2.3. Support with longer term rehousing options

If you're a Council tenant, you can speak to your Neighbourhood Officer about rehousing options – this might include accessing our mutual exchange programme, or requesting an internal transfer, for instance. If you're not a Council tenant, you can apply to join the Housing Register if you are eligible – learn more about this [here](#). You can also get help with accessing private rented accommodation through the Find Your Let scheme, and you can read more on this [here](#). You can also access private rented accommodation through sites such as [Rightmove](#).

For those that are eligible to join the Housing Register as per our [allocations Policy](#), but who may have had issues with rent arrears or anti-social behaviour in a property in the past, we can work with you to help resolve these issues. For instance, this might include setting up affordable payment plans with us for rent arrears over a number of weeks. Our Income Management and Financial Inclusion Team will also work with you to look at any financial support that can be offered.

Whilst the rest of the qualification criteria in our [allocations Policy](#) still applies, victims/survivors can approach any Local Authority for assistance without the need for a local connection if it is unsafe for the applicant or household member to remain in their home area.

3.3. Partnership working

Housing is committed to participating in a multiagency safeguarding response to keep all tenants and residents of Sheffield safe, including sharing information through the High-Risk Domestic Abuse process (MARAC). MARAC is a multi-agency meeting where information is shared on the highest risk domestic abuse cases (and occasionally medium-risk cases). They are attended by a number of different professionals including the police, health, child protection, and housing. At a MARAC, professionals will share any relevant information on a case, discuss options for the victim's safety, and create an action plan to protect the victim. The victim doesn't attend the meeting, but are represented by an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) who speaks on their behalf.

We will work in partnership with a range of specialist domestic abuse services to inform our response, guide us on safe practice, and to signpost victims/survivors for support. We also work in partnership with perpetrator programmes in Sheffield, for perpetrators who recognise their behaviour is wrong and want to change it.

We will also work with partners within the Council to share relevant information where necessary (see section 6) and to learn from and contribute to Domestic Homicide Reviews in order to inform our practice.

We keep an up-to-date list of a range of local and national agencies which may be able to offer advice or support depending on the victim/survivor's circumstances. This can be accessed through the [Sheffield Directory](#).

3.4. Perpetrator response

We will send a clear message that perpetrators of domestic abuse are accountable for their behaviour and that victims/survivors are never to blame. If the abuse occurs in a Council tenancy, we will take action against perpetrators where tenancy conditions have been broken, this may include action to take possession of the property. The [Tenancy Agreement](#) states:

“You, your household and visitors must not do anything which is illegal, dangerous or which would cause nuisance, annoyance, harassment, alarm or distress to other people. This condition applies within the boundary of and in the locality of your property.”

We also recognise that many perpetrators may need support – they may be aware that their behaviour is harmful and might want to make positive changes. Perpetrators can refer themselves (or ask a professional to do so) to Sheffield’s perpetrator accountability programme ‘[Inspire to Change](#)’, to gain a better understanding of their behaviour and learn tools to make change. ‘Caring Dads’ is also another initiative that aims to work with fathers to promote the safety of their children. You can find out more on their [website](#).

3.5. SCC staff who are victim/survivors or perpetrators

We know that unfortunately, many of our staff will also be victims/survivors of domestic abuse. For more information on our response to staff disclosures and the support available, please see our [employee domestic abuse Policy](#).

We also recognise that some of our staff members are Council tenants, and that they may also be experiencing domestic abuse. We would like our staff to know that Housing and the wider organisation will always work to support them through their experiences and safeguard their information from colleagues where it is possible to do so. If they are not comfortable speaking to close colleagues, then they can also access support through Housing’s Domestic Abuse Champion Network – more information can be found on the Council intranet or the Housing & Neighbourhoods Ringbinder.

We recognise that staff may also be perpetrators of domestic abuse. The Council Code of Conduct makes it clear that activities outside work can have an impact on an employment relationship within the Council. Where an employee is an alleged perpetrator of domestic abuse this matter will be taken seriously by the Council, depending on the circumstances of the case, this may result in disciplinary action.

4. EQUALITIES COMMITMENTS

We will meet the requirements relating to equality and diversity laid down in the Equality Act 2010. Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010 contains the ‘Public Sector Equality Duty’, under which the Council as a public authority must, in exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct by or under this Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

We will make sure anyone can report domestic abuse to us, providing interpreters and translating information (including this Policy) into other languages or formats as needed, in so far as possible. This is to make sure that we do not create additional barriers and that everyone can access our service in the way they need.

The service will recognise this intersectionality and understand that certain individuals may face multiple and intersecting forms of disadvantage. We will consider the individual needs of each victim/survivor when tailoring our approach. We understand there are sometimes cultural and other barriers to reporting domestic abuse. We will take all of this into account in the support we provide.

In Sheffield, IDAS are there to support **all** victims of domestic abuse, no matter their background, and you can contact them on: [0808 808 2241](tel:08088082241) or through their [website](#). However, we recognise that some victims/survivors may also want to receive help from those services who are more familiar with their own background. There are more details around this below.

4.1. Domestic abuse and LGBTQ+ relationships

Domestic abuse occurs in all relationship types, including Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender relationships and this may present in different ways. These may include:

- a) The abuser threatening to disclose your sexual orientation or gender identity to family, friends, or work colleagues.
- b) The abuser using society's gender norms and stereotyping to convince you that you will not be believed if you disclose abuse.
- c) The abuser undermining your sexual orientation or gender identity.
- d) The abuser controlling access to safe spaces and networks.
- e) The abuser making derogatory remarks about your gender identity or expression.

These are just a few of the support services that exist for LGBTQ+ victims/survivors. Please reach out to us or these organisations for more information.

- [Galop](#) – national LGBTQ+ helpline
- [Loving Me](#) – for trans and non-binary victims/survivors
- [SAYiT](#) – support for LGBTQ+ young people in Sheffield

4.2. Domestic abuse and people living with disabilities and abuse towards carers

Disabled people may be abused by partners, family members and paid carers. It is common for abusers to use a disabled person's impairments to control and hurt them through:

- a) Physical Abuse – deliberately ignoring a person's care needs, pushing them onto the floor when they are unable to get back up, hitting them when they are unable to get away or defend themselves
- b) Emotional Abuse – saying the disabled person couldn't cope without the abuser, saying that no one else would want them because of their impairments, removing aids which help them to be independent
- c) Sexual Abuse – disabled women in particular are twice as likely to be raped or assaulted ([SafeLives, 2017](#)).

These are just a few of the support services that exist for victims/survivors who are living with disabilities. Please reach out to us or these organisations for more information.

- [Respond](#) – supporting those with learning disabilities, autism or both who have experienced trauma.
- [Disability Sheffield](#) – advocacy services for disabled people in Sheffield.
- [Hourglass](#) – supporting older people who are facing abuse and neglect.
- [Age UK](#) – supporting older people, including those who suffer domestic abuse

- [Sign Health](#) – health and wellbeing support for deaf people

We know that those with caring responsibilities may also be at risk of abuse. Carers who are also victims/survivors may feel worried about what will happen to them or the person they care for if they speak to someone about their experiences. They may think that the abuse by the person they care for is as a result of their medical condition, if they are in pain or feeling upset. However, abuse is never acceptable, regardless of what the other person may be dealing with themselves. You can find out more about this [here](#), or contact Sheffield Carers Centre on 0114 272 8362.

4.3. Domestic abuse and minoritised ethnic communities

Individuals from minoritised communities may experience additional barriers to reporting domestic abuse. They may be concerned about the response from authorities, or they may feel more cultural pressure to stay in the relationship.

These are just a few of the specialist support services that exist for victims/survivors from minoritised communities. Please reach out to us or these organisations for more information.

- [Ashiana](#)
- [Karma Nirvana](#)
- [Snowdrop](#)
- [Roshni](#)
- [The Traveller Movement](#)

4.3.1. So-called ‘honour-based’ abuse

While those from minoritised communities may experience similar types of abuse to other ethnicities, they are also at risk of experiencing specific types of abuse including so-called ‘honour-based abuse’, forced marriage or female genital mutilation (FGM).

So-called “honour-based” abuse is an incident or crime which has been committed to allegedly protect or defend the honour of the family or community. The perpetrators justify their abuse by claiming that the person has brought dishonour or shame to the family, and it is often used to excuse a range of violent acts against victims.

4.3.2. Victims/survivors with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)

A person who is subject to the 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (NRPF) condition, or who does not have any current immigration permission, will not be eligible for homelessness assistance or a housing allocation ([NRPF network](#)). However, there are other avenues of support available.

IDAS, and many of the support services in section 4.3. are able to provide domestic abuse support to victims who have NRPF. The Housing Service may encourage you to contact these services. Housing may also refer you to SCC Adult Social Care for further support.

For further guidance, visit the following websites:

- [No Accommodation Network](#) – voluntary and community sector organisations who provide housing, such as hosting scheme or accommodation projects for those with NRPF.
- [NRPF Network](#) – support for NRPF victims/survivors.

4.4. Domestic abuse and those with complex and multiple needs

We acknowledge that those with complex and multiple needs may be more at risk of domestic abuse and may struggle to access support services. These needs may include things such as substance misuse, mental health issues, homelessness, history of offending, trauma, poverty and sex work. These different needs often intersect with one another and may require a different response than if just one of these issues were occurring on its own. We will always take an intersectional approach and attempt to support victims/survivors holistically, and coordinate with/refer to support services.

These are just a few of the support services that exist for victims/survivors who may have multiple complex needs. Please reach out to us or these organisations for more information.

- [Likewise](#) – for help with drink or drug use
- [Housing Solutions](#) – for help with homelessness
- [Sheffield Mental Health Guide](#)
- [Sheffield Working Women’s Opportunities Project](#)
- [Together Women](#) – for substance misuse advice or support and other wellbeing activities

4.5. Male victims/survivors

We know that the gendered nature of domestic abuse can often make it difficult for men to share their experiences of it. We recognise that men can also be victims of domestic abuse, both in heterosexual and LGBTQ+ relationships. We will always work to support victims/survivors regardless of their sex or gender identity.

These are just a few of the support services that exist for male victims/survivors. Please reach out to us or these organisations for more information.

- [Respect Men’s Advice Line](#) - **0808 8010327**
- [ManKind Men’s helpline](#) - 01823 334244
- [IDAS](#) - support for male victims

For further information on all support services, please visit the [Sheffield Directory](#).

5. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

We have consulted a wide range of groups on the initial iteration of this Policy and will continue to do so throughout any review processes. This Policy will be reviewed every three years to allow us to regularly review best practice, changes to legislation, findings from Domestic Homicide Reviews/Serious Incident Reviews and feedback from staff, tenants and Sheffield residents.

In order for the Policy to become embedded in practice, appropriate staff training and supervision is required. Training is in place for staff to ensure that this Policy and any relevant procedures are followed.

If you're unhappy with the service you receive, you can follow our [complaints procedure](#) and we may use any complaints to inform our reviews.

We will work to promote this Policy in the following ways: advertising it to tenants through engagement opportunities e.g. Tenants and Residents Associations, on our website, through our social media, and ensuring it is read by all staff within the service as part of a domestic abuse training package.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA PROTECTION

We will respect confidentiality and privacy wherever possible and will seek to gain informed consent when there is an intention to share information.

We will not share information without consent unless required to do so by law, or if the information is necessary to protect a child or an adult at risk.

Housing will ensure that it treats personal information lawfully and correctly. We will ensure that we share information in a way that meets our obligations under the General Data Protection Regulations.

7. RELATED DOCUMENTS & POLICY CONTEXT

- Employee Domestic Abuse Policy
- Domestic Abuse Procedure for Housing Staff
- Allocations Policy
- Anti-social Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Safeguarding and Supporting Children and Adults Procedures
- Data Protection Policy
- Neighbourhoods & Community Standards from the Regulator of Social Housing

This Policy also supports the Domestic and Sexual Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy for Sheffield.

This document is the responsibility of the Tenancy Enforcement and Sustainment Team

Housing Service, Sheffield City Council

Enquiries should be sent to tenancyenforcementandsustainment@sheffield.gov.uk

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