

# Domestic Abuse Policy

## 1. Summary

- 1.1. This policy sets out how SHAL Housing will take steps to assist and support any person experiencing or threatened with domestic abuse, it applies to all customers including those living with our tenants.
- 1.2. Domestic abuse is still a largely hidden crime and measuring the true scale of the issue is difficult. Domestic abuse happens in all communities, regardless of gender, age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership and pregnancy or maternity.
- 1.3. As a Housing Provider we are well placed to recognise the signs of domestic abuse. It is absolutely essential we take all reports of domestic abuse seriously and work positively and pro-actively with the victim to offer support.
- 1.4. In addition, we will seek to assist perpetrators of domestic abuse who wish to positively change their behaviour by helping them access support and assistance.

## 2. Objectives

- 2.1. To enable people to fulfil their aspirations, we will promote the welfare of all victims of domestic abuse who come in to contact with SHAL
- 2.2. Create a safe environment where victims of domestic abuse feel they can approach us, are encouraged to talk and are listened to, enabling them to make informed decisions about their lives and live more independently
- 2.3. Provide timely and effective guidance by working in partnership with relevant agencies to respond to any cases of abuse that may arise. We seek to enhance the safety and security of those involved and also support them to increase their confidence, resilience and empower themselves to live more independently
- 2.4. Provide employees with clear and practical guidance to ensure we support victims of abuse, allowing victims to have more information about their choices so that they feel empowered to fulfil their ambitions

---

Current version	Date agreed/reviewed	Review due	Owner	Pages
1.0	2022-08	2027-08	HM	Page 1 of 9
Crypton House, Bristol Road, Bridgwater, TA6 4SY – Online: <a href="http://www.shal.org">www.shal.org</a> – Email: <a href="mailto:information@shal.org">information@shal.org</a> – Tel: 01278 444344				
<i>SHAL is registered in England and Wales as a Community Benefit Society and an exempt charity (number 27772R).</i>				

---

- 2.5. Work in partnership to offer perpetrators of domestic abuse who recognise and seek change in their behaviour. We will work with perpetrators to increase their motivation, skills and knowledge and build confidence and resilience to combat their abusive behaviour patterns.

### 3. Details

- 3.1. The cross government definition of domestic abuse is:
  - 3.1.1. 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.
- 3.2. In 2014 the Government introduced a new domestic abuse offence of coercive and controlling behaviour.
- 3.3. Controlling behaviour includes a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/ or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capabilities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.
- 3.4. Coercive behaviour is a an act or pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to punish, harm or frighten their victim.
- 3.5. The new law will help protect victims by outlawing sustained patterns of behaviour that stop short of serious physical violence, but amount to extreme psychological and emotional abuse. Victims of coercive control can have every aspect of life controlled by their partner, often being subjected to daily intimidation and harassment.
- 3.6. Domestic abuse can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:
  - 3.6.1. Psychological
  - 3.6.2. Physical

- 3.6.3. Sexual
- 3.6.4. Financial
- 3.6.5. Emotional
- 3.6.6. Discriminatory
- 3.7. The definition includes honour based abuse, forced marriage, and female genital mutilation. The impact of domestic abuse can range from loss of self-esteem to loss of life.
- 3.8. Physical abuse can include: hitting, punching, kicking, slapping, hitting with objects, pulling hair, pushing or shoving, cutting or stabbing, restraining, strangulation, choking.
- 3.9. Sexual abuse can include rape and coerced sex, forcing a victim to take part in unwanted sexual acts, refusal to practice safe sex or use contraception, threatened or actual sexual abuse of children.
- 3.10. Financial abuse can include controlling money and bank accounts, making a victim account for all of their expenditure, running up debts in a victim's name, allowing no say on how monies are spent, refusing to allow them to study or work, or demanding that they work.
- 3.11. Psychological and emotional violence and abuse has a profound impact upon victims and their children. It can leave a victim with little confidence that they can do anything or change the situation. Examples include:
  - 3.11.1. Creating isolation e.g. not allowing them to see other people, preventing them from making their own friendships, not allowing them to go anywhere on their own, causing them to be depressed and then using this against them.
  - 3.11.2. Use of threats e.g. threats to kill their family, children, friends, pets; to throw them out and keep the children; to find them if they ever leave; to have them locked up; to tell everyone they are mad.
  - 3.11.3. Putting them down – humiliating and undermining them in front of others or in front of their children; telling them they are stupid,

hopeless, unlovable, that no one would believe them, or that they are a bad parent.

- 3.12. Discriminatory abuse (with reference to forced marriage) may manifest itself as any of the other categories of abuse, however what makes discriminatory abuse distinctive is it is motivated by oppressive and discriminatory attitudes towards a persons:
  - 3.12.1. Disability/sensory impairment
  - 3.12.2. Learning disability/mental health
  - 3.12.3. Race/religion/culture
  - 3.12.4. Gender/gender identity/sexual orientation
  - 3.12.5. Age/physical appearance
- 3.13. Coercive and controlling behaviour underpins domestic abuse and is explained as a range of purposeful behaviours including intimidation, isolation, emotional abuse and manipulation. These behaviours are often used as the primary mechanisms for achieving power and control in an abusive relationship and these behaviours reinforce the threat or reality of physical abuse
- 3.14. Domestic abuse approaches have traditionally focused upon heterosexual partner abuse and more recently have been seen to address abuse in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender relationships.
- 3.15. More focus is required to address family and intergenerational abuse, and how it differs from partner abuse, for example if the perpetrator is the victim's teenage or adult sibling, child or grandchild.
- 3.16. Careful consideration is required when dealing with family and inter-generational abuse due to complexities of family composition and safeguarding implications
- 3.17. At SHAL, we believe that our tenants and staff should not live in fear of violence or abuse from a partner, former partner or any other member of their household.

- 3.18. Anyone experiencing domestic abuse will be treated in a supportive, non-judgmental way. A victim’s disclosure alone is sufficient for them to be given advice and assistance as a matter of priority by staff.
- 3.19. We will:
  - 3.19.1. Ensure that people experiencing domestic abuse can access appropriate services as early as possible and are given advice to enable them to make informed choices about what to do next
  - 3.19.2. Support people who have experienced abuse to rebuild their lives by working in partnership with them and other support agencies
  - 3.19.3. Ensure that where children and young people are affected by domestic abuse, they too have access to services as soon as possible
  - 3.19.4. Support victims to employ the use of civil and criminal law which can offer them protection and also act as a preventative measure to avoid further abuse
  - 3.19.5. Ensure that people experiencing abuse will not be deterred from reporting abuse
  - 3.19.6. Seek appropriate support solutions for perpetrators of domestic abuse to prevent abuse recurring
  - 3.19.7. Follow the relevant child protection/ Safeguarding Children procedures if we believe a child is at risk due to an abusive relationship
  - 3.19.8. Follow the relevant Safeguarding Adult procedures if we feel a vulnerable adult is at risk due to an abusive relationship
  - 3.19.9. Provide support and guidance to employees experiencing domestic abuse
  - 3.19.10. Not tolerate domestic abuse from our employees and work with them to provide support to any member of staff who is a victim or perpetrator of domestic abuse
- 3.20. Wellbeing

3.20.1. The Care Act 2014 specifies that freedom from abuse and neglect is a key part of a person’s wellbeing. The guidance outlines that abuse takes many forms, and practitioners should not be restrained in their view of what constitutes abuse or neglect. It describes numerous types of abuse including:

- a Domestic abuse
- b Psychological abuse
- c Financial and material abuse
- d Sexual abuse
- e Physical abuse
- f The Care Act guidance outlines specific aims to stop abuse and neglect, prevent harm and address what has caused the abuse.

3.21. The Care Act guidance outlines specific aims to stop abuse and neglect, prevent harm and address what has caused the abuse.

3.22. Making the link to Safeguarding

3.22.1. A significant number of adults who need safeguarding are often experiencing domestic abuse in some form. Despite the overlap between supporting abuse victims and safeguarding adults, the two have developed separate professional practices.

3.22.2. If domestic abuse is an isolated issue and there are no other safeguarding concerns then support can be sought via forums such as MARAC (Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference). If there is more than one safeguarding issue present, such as domestic abuse in addition to physical or mental health disabilities then a referral should be made to Safeguarding Adults so that services can be coordinated to deal with the potentially complex issues

3.22.3. All staff employed by SHAL, Contractors, Board Members and Volunteers are in a position of trust and should promote the welfare of Tenants and their children. If you suspect abuse or receive a report that

abuse to a person with care or a support need is occurring, including by anyone in a relationship with them (e.g. friends, relatives, housing staff, volunteer workers, health/social care workers, Board members, contractors), this policy should be implemented. You do not have to be 100% certain that abuse is taking place. It might turn out that there is not a problem, or that the problem is not about abuse, it doesn't matter. Never turning a blind eye is very important. Everyone is expected to follow 'See Something, Say Something' guidance.

#### **4. Outcomes**

- 4.1. We will help to create a safe environment where victims of domestic abuse feel they can approach us, are encouraged to talk and are listened to, enabling them to make informed decisions about their lives and live more independently
- 4.2. Victims of domestic abuse will feel supported by SHAL, they will know we are here to support them and provide detailed information to help them make an informed decision

#### **5. Consultation**

- 5.1. A draft copy of this policy will be available on our website to allow members of the public an opportunity to comment on its contents prior to being submitted for approval by SHAL's board.
- 5.2. All tenants will be contacted by text to advise of its availability online and a draft copy will also be made available on request.
- 5.3. SHAL's tenant scrutiny panel will also be invited to review the policy and suggest any comments and amendments prior to the policy being approved by the board.

#### **6. Equality and Diversity**

- 6.1. SHAL are committed to the principles of equality and diversity throughout the organisation. In the context of dealing with domestic abuse cases, we aim to:
- 6.2. Meet the needs and choices of people from all backgrounds and take into consideration gender, age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or

belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy or maternity.

- 6.3. Ensure our service is responsive and meets the needs of our existing and prospective tenants and customers.
- 6.4. Understand the cultural implications and barriers to responding to domestic abuse.
- 6.5. Ensure that all sections of the community in which we work have access to our service.

## 7. Value for Money

- 7.1. We will regularly review our processes to ensure resources and services are providing best value for money to our residents.



**8. Owner**

8.1. Housing Manager

**9. Version and Revisions**

9.1. This policy will be reviewed every 5 year(s).

9.2. Revisions

New version	Date	Revision details